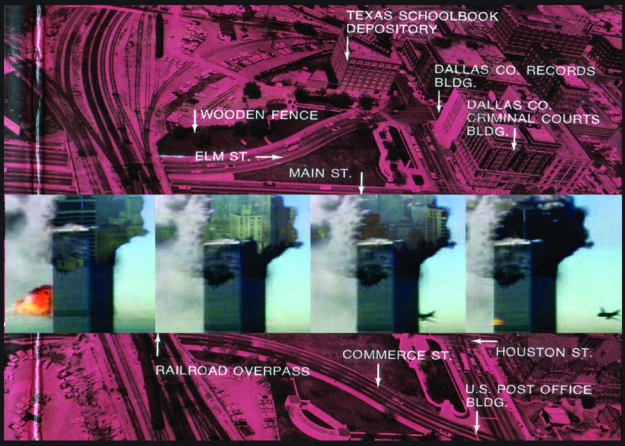
David Ray Carter

Conspiracy Cinema

Propaganda, politics and paranoia



HEADPRESS

Conspiracy Cinema

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by

David Ray Carter

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FOREWORD

BY MICK FARREN

A GRASSY KNOLL TOO FAR

I HAVE MAYBE, AT THIS LATE STAGE IN THE GAME, STOOD ON TOO MANY grassy knolls and listened too long to the seductively mendacious counterclaims and crossfire of disinformation. I may now need a map to tell me where I've been. I find it hard to still rise to the same continuing fury at all the manifold layers of lies denied, and all the distortions of disappointment and contortions of evil that have buckled and manipulated our hidden human history. Who burned the Reichstag? Do I really care anymore? Or is it sufficient that the building burned and Nazism was provided with a gift-wrapped faux-excuse for butchery and brutality, and a spurious rationale to tighten the already-locked iron manacles of oppression and jackboot dictatorship? All too often the real and sad purpose of core conspiracies is merely to provide a mask for the perpetrators—the murderers who manage the seeming impossibility of being able to remain unashamed of their holocaust handiwork even when the numbers run to visible millions.

My own first conspiracy encounter was in November of 1963, but it wasn't—as might be so completely expected—wholly and directly concerned with the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The first US President to offer any measure of hope to my generation had been gunned down in an open Lincoln Continental, on a sixties-modern, urban freeway plaza in Dallas, Texas. But—by day two—the drama was already being spun and promoted as a uniquely fatal aberration by the first lone-nut gunman of my lifetime, and I was a sufficiently perverse teenager that my hackles rose not so much at the killing of the king but at the slaying of Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin, by Jack Ruby, a low level bagman for Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana.

Jack Kennedy may have been the hallowed victim with the bloody and exposed brain, the shattered head, and the Zapruder-film death throes, laid low because he sought to challenge the military industrial complex and defang the mayhem maze of the national intelligence community, but it was Oswald who opened the complex and convoluted gates of Eden. He was the corpse-portal to a half-century of the KGB, the CIA, the Illuminati, the eyes-in-pyramids, supersonic spy-planes, cheap Italian mail-order rifles, all the way to the Jungian realms of all-controlling aliens from Zeta Reticuli, and gun battles fought in the measureless caverns of their luminous green bases beneath Dulce, New Mexico. Oswald was the first to usher me through the distorted looking glass and down into the paranoid labyrinth where octopods link the pawns and possibilities, logical conclusions orbit scenarios of doom, and we encounter our worst fears coming back at us as fact, when morning commuter jets cleave in flames through the towers of Manhattan.

I may very well have stood too long on too many grassy knolls than have been good for either my health, sanity, or perspectives of history, and I have definitely listened far too long to the seductively mendacious counterclaims and the crossfire of disinformation. I may now really need a map to tell me where I've been. Thus it is that, when a book like David Ray Carter's *Conspiracy Cinema* can provide an authoritative guide to the almost unknowable territory of conspiracy—in this case as presented by multiple levels of motion pictures—I can only rejoice that my time in the twisting wind was not in vain, and that generations to come will not be compelled to relearn the hard way all the turns and tricks of a terrifying and frequently terrorist game.

PREFACE

BY THOMAS McGRATH

When the Twin Towers fell, the world was told to blame Islamic terrorists, and America embarked on a 'crusade' against terror, the post-millennial message was that the twentieth century, distinguished by the clash of ideologies, of contesting rational ideas, was a mere contretemps in human history, and our species had promptly reverted to what it knows best, not the clash of rational ideas, but of irrational ones—metaphysical, magical, religious…

Bad enough, for those raised in an aging Enlightenment worldview! The least you might say was that humanity appeared cursed, but for the fact that the very idea of a curse was well outside rational boundaries. In short, the Enlightenment itself took a crushing blow that day, a wound echoed in the reality principles of most westerners that watched the attacks on television. Was it any accident that within a couple of years some authors from England (usually the home of passive agnosticism) began a global debate about—the existence of God? Was it any accident that within a couple of years a very sizable number of souls would have doubts regarding the real authors of the 9-11 attacks themselves—mostly courtesy of a growing cinematic genre, freely distributed online, which the author of this book has christened Conspiracy Cinema?

Doubts regarding the real authors of the 9-11 attacks? In his best-selling polemic against conspiracy theories, *Voodoo Histories* (a fairly recent addition to the English rationalist reaction of Hitchens, Dawkins *et al*), David Aaronovitch appeals to Thomas Paine's ironic blueprint for analyzing miracles—it is always more likely that someone is lying, or mistaken, than nature's machine has hiccupped, and therefore no account of a miracle can ever really be taken seriously. Aaronovitch suggests we might profitably apply the same criteria when considering conspiracy theories, and we can see why he might equate the miracle

with the conspiracy—for wouldn't, say, 9-11 being a self-inflicted wound and stage-managed spectacle be… miraculous. Much more likely that whatever is said, or whomsoever says it, is mistaken, or mendacious…

Some people are naturally repelled by the existential instability the existence of miracles and/or conspiracies imply (Paine's formula licenses the aversion very neatly). Others, however, are drawn to it, and consequently often become addicted to the subject, endlessly searching for the impossible—a conclusive piece of information that would establish that reality is as fragile, dangerous and daunting as the existence of miracles and/or conspiracies implies.

And so Conspiracy Cinema has to be one of the strangest genres of cinema ever conceived, a form of entertainment where the average viewer suspends their *belief*, which is to say their worldview, allowing it to be attacked for an hour or two, the philosophical equivalent of an extreme sport. And with *Conspiracy Cinema*, David Ray Carter has written what this both omnipresent and marginalized genre has lacked—a definitive guide, an overview that enables the reader to appreciate the many tendrils that interconnect the competing conspiracies, as well as offering lucid and insightful evaluations of the respective production values and lines of argument employed by the films used to communicate these theories to mass audiences.

The full interaction with the topic this work invites the reader to embark upon (the countless films it introduces being the click of a mouse away) is an exhausting, frightening and—at least to those tireless hunters of the historical miracle—tantalizing one, a systematic derangement of the historical senses. Which might just be what any self-respecting citizen of this increasingly terrifying century be advised to get a head start on.

INTRODUCTION

CONSPIRACY THEORIES & CONSPIRACY CINEMA

The term "conspiracy theory" is commonly used to refer to a belief that differs from or runs counter to the accepted line of thinking on a particular topic. It is almost exclusively used derogatorily, implying a view that is unfounded, illogical, or paranoid. By way of an example: a belief that the timing of a traffic light is not set to ensure the orderly flow of traffic but is, in fact, orchestrated specifically to make you late for work meets all the qualifications for this definition of conspiracy theory. It is unprovable, highly illogical, and paranoid to assume that local governments, urban planners, and civil engineers would conspire against a single individual, much less so for a reason from which they would get no obvious benefit.

Conspiracism, or belief in conspiracy theories, is about more than simply finding an excuse for your tardiness, however. Conspiracism is a belief system, a way of looking at the world. Conspiracy theories are an approach to historical analysis that discard the accepted versions in favor of alternate ones by interpreting the historical record differently or, as is often the case, using a different set of records all together. To the conspiracy theorist, unseen machinations are at the root of every world event and invisible hands guide the course of human history. But a conspiracy theory view of history denotes something greater than merely acknowledging the times when the existence of a conspiracy has been proven, such as in the Dreyfus Affair or Watergate. In its most common usage, conspiracism is more specifically the study of covert actions taken by those with power—be it political, financial, or organizational—against those without it in order to sustain or expand that power. It is not a Marxist view of history, but instead a world view where history is dictated not by the struggle between the haves and the have-nots but between the controllers and the controlled.

The conspiracy theorist can easily point to classical history for validation of his or her beliefs. The Greek philosopher Socrates learned that there are consequences for criticizing the state, particularly when that state controls the legal system. Julius Caesar met his death at the hands of a conspiracy concocted by his fellow Roman statesmen. Traditional accounts of the life of Jesus Christ attribute his arrest to a conspiracy involving the Jewish Sanhedrin, Roman officials, and a member of his inner circle. If we were to analyze these events using a conspiracy theory approach, Socrates, Julius Caesar, and Jesus Christ represented threats to the existing power systems of their day and were assassinated by their governments. Furthermore, if you were to ask a conspiracy theorist, these are just the first of many examples throughout history where the powerful have acted nefariously by use of assassination, misinformation, cover-ups, and a host of other means.

It is impossible to know what the first conspiracy theory was or who promoted it but it is not too great a supposition to assume that there have always been individuals who have viewed history in this manner. It was not until the twentieth century that conspiracy theorists began actively communicating with each other and the public-at-large though. The watershed moment was the 1963 assassination of President John F Kennedy. The popular President's assassination, its subsequent attribution to the mysterious Lee Harvey Oswald, and the Warren Commission's report that Oswald had acted alone in Kennedy's assassination raised eyebrows among many who likely would not have thought of themselves as "conspiracy theorists." Questions about the "official version" of the story were raised almost immediately and, for some, the Kennedy assassination was a call to action. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of Mae Brussell, a former housewife turned independent researcher who became the first widely-known American conspiracy theorist of the modern age. Brussell presented her meticulously researched views on the Kennedy assassination and other topics on her radio show, *Dialogue: Conspiracy*.

Brussell's influence over the field of conspiracy theory cannot be underestimated. As both a radio presenter and journalist, Brussell gave a legitimacy to conspiracism that it sorely lacked. What once existed only in the realm of gossip became a serious field of research in Brussell's hands but she remained a marginalized figure in the world of journalism. Brussell also presented a "unified theory" of conspiracies, linking

the Kennedy assassinations, the Manson Family slayings, and Watergate to a shadowy organization working within the structure of the United States government. Brussell was one of the first conspiracy theorists to link together seemingly unrelated events in order to discover a connection—a technique that is now deeply ingrained in conspiracism. The success of her radio shows and articles also dictated the mediums by which conspiracy theories would be disseminated throughout the seventies, eighties, and early nineties. Conspiracy theories were relegated to call-in radio shows, obscure magazines and newsletters, and the occasional book released by a small publishing house. Conspiracy theorists had the ability to communicate with one another but the "fringe" nature of these media formats meant that new converts were unlikely. That would soon change, however.

The late eighties and early nineties saw a rise in the use of the internet for recreational purposes and one of the earliest forms of user-to-user communication was the discussion system USENET. In 1988, the *alt.* hierarchy was created on USENET, which allowed users to create a newsgroup on any topic they wished and engage in unmoderated discussion. It was in the *alt.* hierarchy that the newsgroup *alt.conspiracy* was created, allowing conspiracy theorists to exchange ideas in real time. The technology allowed conspiracy thinking to proliferate and become more democratized, as any anonymous user's theory was now readily accessible to the curious, a privilege once reserved for only those lucky enough to have their ideas published or broadcast via radio. As the internet became more sophisticated, conspiracy newsgroups turned into conspiracy websites, allowing an individual or group of individuals to widely promote their own theories as well as discuss and share information with fellow theorists.

Google.com reports that in January 2010 the volume of searches for the term "conspiracy theory" were at more than double their previous high. Clearly, interest in conspiracy theories is not waning, and the popularity of the topic has spurred theorists to branch out beyond the internet into other media to disseminate their messages. Some are involved in the creation of what I call Conspiracy Cinema—films by amateur filmmakers that are used to promote a specific viewpoint on a popular conspiracy theory. These works are primarily distributed and marketed via the internet, are often available for free download, and can range in quality from poorly-edited compilations of news footage

to slick, Hollywood-style documentaries.

Conspiracy cinema is the most successful method of propagating conspiracy theories to date. Dylan Avery's 9-11 conspiracy documentary *Loose Change* has sold over one million copies on DVD and has been downloaded or viewed online by even larger numbers of people. Alex Jones, one of the most prolific producers of Conspiracy Cinema, has become a pop culture figure, appearing on television shows and mainstream films such as Richard Linklater's *Waking Life*. Jones and the genre he helped popularize are not without their critics, however. On September 2, 2010, ABC's *Nightline* called Conspiracy Cinema "paranoia porn" in a piece on Alex Jones. Despite the criticisms, the genre shows no signs of stopping or slowing down. At the time of writing, there are hundreds of entries in the Conspiracy Cinema canon expounding on topics ranging from 9-11 to the Kennedy assassination to the banking system to shape-shifting reptilian aliens that allegedly control the world, and new films appear almost daily.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I FIRST BECAME AWARE OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES DURING THE GLUT OF conspiracism that surfaced into the mainstream upon the 1991 release of Oliver Stone's movie *JFK*. The idea that people did not believe that Oswald killed Kennedy was mind-blowing. It was in the encyclopedia, after all, not to mention every history textbook I had. How could anyone disagree? It had to be a fact, otherwise it wouldn't have been printed in those books, teachers wouldn't teach it, and television shows wouldn't say it was true. Someone had to be wrong; either everyone had been lying to me (and the rest of the world) or the conspiracy theorists were insane.

The conclusion I would ultimately reach requires a little back story. I grew up in a small town in Alabama and was raised in a charismatic Southern Baptist church. My parents were religious people but also very indulgent of my interests which invariably corresponded to whatever I had been warned against the previous Sunday. From age six onwards, I developed an addiction to horror movies that has remained with me my entire life. I played violent videogames, listened to heavy metal, and played the electric guitar. Needless to say, in 1991 at age

thirteen, I was looking to rebel in any way possible.

Conspiracy theories are a type of rebellion. The act of disbelieving an accepted history is a powerful one, one that immediately puts you at odds with the rest of society. To use the language of the sixties, it's a way of "dropping out." Conspiracism is a refusal to accept what you're told regardless of what proof is offered. It's juvenile. It's reckless. It's Brando in *The Wild One* saying, "Whattya got?" It's not socially acceptable. It's the lower half of Elvis' body on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. It's crude and crass. It's Johnny Rotten screeching, "God save the Queen, she ain't no human bein'!" It was perfect.

JFK was a watershed moment for me and I saw the film dozens of times. When I grew bored of that, I borrowed every book my library had on JFK, RFK, UFOs, ghosts, Bigfoot… you name it. In 1993, *The X-Files* debuted and I became even more obsessed with conspiracies. It's hard to overestimate the importance the show had on mainstreaming conspiracism, especially paranormal conspiracies and UFOlogy. Each week audiences were treated to a new monster or alien, but the underlying premise of the series was that the United States government was lying to its people. While very few of the episodes dealt directly with conspiracy theories like the New World Order or the Kennedy assassination, *The X-Files* presented a very conspiratorial view of the world, one where truth is a prize only for those brave enough to seek it out.

Luckily for me, I became interested in conspiracy theories during the dawn of the internet age. The internet was a godsend for me, as it was for legions of other conspiracy theorists that previously had to diligently search out information and only rarely interacted with one another. Like many, my first taste of internet conspiracy theory came courtesy of the *alt.conspiracy* board and its various sub-boards. It was slow, clumsy, and unreliable, but it was something. Things improved dramatically as websites began to spring up dedicated to various theories, and America Online's keyword site *Parascope* was a faster, more aesthetically pleasing way to learn about theories and interact with like-minded users.

Then somewhere around 1996, the conspiracy bug wore off. No new information was coming out, and I found myself checking the websites less and less until finally one day not at all. I went to college, studied history—the kind that normal people believe in—and became a film critic. I forgot all about the government secrets, the nefarious plots of

the Illuminati, and our frequent alien visitors for a few years and lived like a normal person. No more tinfoil hats, no more paranoia. It was nice for a while.

Conspiracism came back into my life in a big way around 10:30 AM Eastern Standard Time on September 11, 2001. I won't claim that I immediately knew a conspiracy was involved, or that I even had an opinion or a coherent thought other than the shocked numbness that we all felt on the morning. Something about that event made me remember my short time as a conspiracist, and I immediately began to wonder what those websites and message boards I had spent so many hours on were saying on that morning. After a few hours of bouncing between the televised news and the internet, I eventually decided to stick with the conspiracy theorists for the remainder of the day; I had been sucked in again.

I would love to tell you that the conspiracy community solved all of the mysteries of 9-11 later that same day, but that's not how conspiracy theories work. They grow and develop over time through community input. When a theorist puts forth "their theory," what they are really presenting is their opinion on the research of the group. Conspiracism is a collaborative effort and sometimes a painfully slow process. The most well known Conspiracy Cinema film on 9-11, *Loose Change*, was made four years after the event. Furthermore, it was made after dozens of Conspiracy Cinema films had been made on the topic and at least three times as many books had been published. Even though my reimmersion into the world of conspiracy theories left me with more questions than answers, the renewed vigor with which the community was moving after 9-11 meant that I wasn't likely to get bored with it again.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Fast forward to 2009. After having some success as a film critic and occasional lecturer, I was watching anywhere from five to sometimes ten movies a week for reviews. Everyone needs a break sometimes—even from things they love doing—so as a way of "taking a break" I would watch what I now call Conspiracy Cinema films. It was a combination of two of my favorite things and many of the films I saw were quite good and, before long, these "breaks" were taking up more

and more of my time.

I was initially attracted to the content of these films, but soon other aspects of their existence became intriguing. I knew well the time, effort, and expense of film production, so it struck me as odd that so many Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers were creating films and distributing them for free. Granted, a good number of the films were nothing more than collections of clips, but since most of these films were over two or three hours long, the time commitment in making them was considerable. I was familiar with commercial cinema, non-commercial cinema, the avant-garde, indie films, and the like, but the idea that someone would devote their time and energy into a project and then distribute it for free and often anonymously seemed bizarre. That type of dedication to an idea goes beyond the triteness of a "labor of love." Someone who goes to those lengths would have to be more driven than the average filmmaker and have a greater sense of purpose. They would have to have a warning to give the world, and it would be important to them that large numbers of people heard that warning as soon as possible.

I began to wonder why an individual with no prior filmmaking experience would try their hand at the medium to spread their message. I realized that film had a power that printed words on a page often lacked. When dealing with conspiracy theory, anything the theorist reads is processed through several layers of understanding. There is the first level of the official version of the story, how the theory you are being presented with compares to the accepted history. The second is a type of logical test. The theorist asks his or herself, "Does this make sense logically? Could this really have happened this way?" Finally, it is filtered through the theorist's own memories of the event, if applicable. Those of us who witnessed 9-11 have a very distinct memory of that event, one that will inevitably surface when presented with a conspiracy theory regarding it.

Conspiracy cinema circumvents these layers of understanding. The film presents you with a recontextualized official version, persuades you into believing that its theories are logical, and bypasses and possibly replaces your memories by showing you the event again in a new context. To understand better how this works, think of the Zapruder film. There is nothing written about the Kennedy assassination that has the ability to give you the same level of comprehension about the event as watching it take place. Viewing it turns the Kennedy assassination from

something that *happened* in the past, to something that is *happening* right now before your eyes. Now imagine the Zapruder film as shown in Oliver Stone's *JFK*, Kevin Costner's voice explaining the action frame by frame. By adding the explanation, the event is recontextualized and given the appearance of being logical. The viewer no longer has to process these events on his or her own, they're being told what to think. Lastly, it has the ability to change your memories of the event. Regardless of how many times you had seen the Zapruder film prior to *JFK*, the film changed the way you would see it in the future. Even if completely removed from the context of the film, a good number of people will hear Costner's voice in their heads saying "back… and to the left, back… and to the left" when presented with the Zapruder film in the future.

The fact that Conspiracy Cinema sneaks past the mind's "bullshit detector"—for lack of a better term—shouldn't be taken as an intentionally devious act. It is simply a function of how we interact with works of art, particularly cinema. The viewer approaches Conspiracy Cinema in the same way they approach narrative cinema: with a suspension of disbelief. Different types of cinema require different levels of this suspension—for instance, *Harry Potter* requires a greater suspension of disbelief than *When Harry Met Sally*.

Documentary cinema, though ostensibly based in truth, requires a suspension of disbelief of a different type. The viewer assumes that the information they are being presented is factual and the idea that documentaries present reality is ingrained in our culture. To use a cinematic point of reference, most viewers take Mondo films and "shockumentaries" as being authentic, despite evidence of their falsity. These films operate by leveraging the viewer's predisposition to accept the documentary format as being a depiction of reality. This allows shockumentary filmmakers to include faked footage, recreations, and the occasional lie in order to craft a work that is more exciting and controversial—and less expensive to make—than if they had exclusively used actual documentary footage. This technique is successful because the documentary format decreases the likelihood the viewer will question the authenticity of such instances. Therefore, when a work using the documentary format gives the audience a statistic, quote, or factoid, many viewers will not question its veracity by virtue of how it is being presented.

Like the Mondo film, Conspiracy Cinema leverages the viewer's predisposition, and possibly even desire, to accept the statements they make as facts. Mondo filmmakers of course had a profit motive, and although many of the films discussed in this work are sold for profit, I will leave it up to the reader to decide which filmmakers are exploiting this trust. For my purposes, I will assume that the filmmakers were so convinced of the validity and importance of their message that they created the film to persuade others to believe the same, join their cause, or heed their warning.

On the Films in This Book

The main goal of this book is to create a catalog of Conspiracy Cinema films and to provide a synopsis and analysis of the works in the style of a film review. Where it is logical to do so, sections will begin with an overview of the topic consisting of the historical facts, the "official version," and finally the most popular conspiracy theories. The narratives of the films will be explained in unbiased terms and this book has not been written from any particular political or ideological viewpoint. The theories described in this work are those of the filmmakers alone and any decision on the validity of their claims is left up to the reader. My hope is that you will take the same level of interest in this field as I have and be curious about all of the theories, whether they are convincing to you or not.

The films will be analyzed from two perspectives. They will first be evaluated as a work of cinema: the quality of the production values, the way the work is structured, and the entertainment value of the work will be assessed. Secondly, the film's methodology will be analyzed. Has the filmmaker provided ample evidence for their claims? Does the film make its point effectively? Particular focus will be given to the methods used to persuade viewers and whether the film makes valid arguments or engages in "logical trickery" to sway the audience. We shall also see that Conspiracy Cinema has a history dating earlier than the internet and, when relevant, examples of a particular theory's appearance in mainstream cinema will be given.

I watched a considerable number of films that did not make it into this book for one reason or another. The most common reason some-

thing was left out was because it was too similar to other works already included. There were certain films and filmmakers that I felt it necessary to give preference to by virtue of their popularity or notoriety, so unfortunately those films that didn't distinguish themselves in some way have been omitted. Conspiracy cinema, by its very nature, is not a particularly "original" genre—most films follow the same structural format and present the same ideas as other films on the same topic. Therefore many reviews will focus on how the film in question is different, rather than how it conforms to the standards of the genre. As to be expected, preference was given to any film presenting a wholly unique take on a conspiracy theory and I have done my best to include at least one example of every major theory on a given subject.

Secondly, I had to limit my definition of "Conspiracy Cinema." One can spend hours watching conspiracy-themed "films" on YouTube (trust me, I have) so it was necessary for me to restrict my focus to those works that most conform to the standard documentary format. This means preference was given to films available on DVD or downloadable as a complete work from the filmmaker's website or through other channels. There is a great deal of overlap between films available on YouTube or other streaming media sites and films included in this book, however, so online availability certainly did not disqualify a film from being included. Rest assured that I have tried to include a sampling of the best and worst the genre has to offer, regardless of the medium in which it was presented.

Also to that point, it became necessary to exclude filmed lectures and television programs. Filmed lectures constitute a sizable portion of the Conspiracy Cinema canon, but, frankly, there's very little to write about a lecture other than a recap of what the speaker has said. A few filmed lectures have been included, but only those which are especially relevant to the topic or feature an important member of the conspiracy community.

Likewise, television has become rife with conspiracism in recent years. There is already a sizable amount of scholarship on *The X-Files*, and my opinions on the subject would yield little new insight. The television networks the History Channel, the Discovery Channel, and the Learning Channel have all featured series or specials that certainly fall into the realm of conspiracy theory, but I decided to approach these works with the mind of a conspiracist. Would any *real truth* be allowed

to be broadcast worldwide on television? The conspiracy theorist would say no, thus the programs from those networks and TruTV's *Conspiracy Theory with Jesse Ventura* have been omitted.

Several "mainstream" films have been included where germane to the topic, as have several documentaries which the filmmakers would likely resent being referred to as Conspiracy Cinema. There are, however, no Michael Moore films in this book. Why? The main reason is because they are so well-known. My goal for this book was to document films that have yet to receive any serious critical or academic attention, and Moore's films have received their fair share. Secondly, Moore isn't a conspiracy theorist. *Fahrenheit 9-11* shocked a lot of mainstream audiences, but it was a non-event in the world of conspiracy theory. Conspiracy cinema filmmakers had already produced three years worth of films on the topic of 9-11 at that point, and Moore's film didn't present anything that the average conspiracy theorist didn't already know.

Finally, some films have been excluded on the basis of their subject matter. The conspiracy must be readily evident in the film, so for that reason, the hundreds of films on UFOs, environmental issues, and the supernatural have been left out unless they are explicitly conspiratorial in nature. Also unfortunately left out of this work are the legions of "predictive programming" films. "Predictive programming" is the theory that important conspiratorial events are hinted at in songs, films, and television programs. Although these films are among some of the most spellbinding in the Conspiracy Cinema world, it is impossible to review something that is merely a collection of clips from other media without anything added by the compiler.

FINAL WARNINGS

The world of Conspiracy Cinema is a vast and varied place. The films discussed in this book range from the unintentionally hilarious to the patently offensive and everything in between. Be warned that many of these films present viewpoints that you may find repugnant, misguided, or insane. While some films have been excluded because of not presenting a conspiracy theory, those that do are here regardless of—ok, because of—their controversial natures. Please bear in mind that the ideas in this book are those of the filmmakers. My motto while

writing was, to paraphrase legendary conspiracist William Cooper: "It doesn't matter if I believe it, because *they* believe it." To accurately document the world of Conspiracy Cinema, it was necessary to cover topics that offended me, but I have done my best to present those works as objectively as the others.

So, prepare yourself to enter the wild world of Conspiracy Cinema. Time to take the red pill, go down the rabbit hole, travel through the looking glass, look behind the curtain, and follow the yellow-brick road to the land of the mysterious schemes and plans that (possibly) control all of our lives. Enlightenment isn't guaranteed but entertainment is.

I

EVENT CONSPIRACIES & ASSASSINATIONS

Conspiracy theories are a different way of looking at the world. Events that are meaningless to the average person take on high importance when analyzed through a conspiratorial lens. There is no such thing as coincidence to the conspiracy theorist, so even the most mundane details of life can become portents of something sinister.

Given the importance placed on minutiae in conspiracism, major historical events are considered positively Earth-shattering. A terrorist attack, a war, or an assassination must therefore be scrutinized in the greatest detail possible, lest some otherwise ignored clue slip past.

This chapter contains reviews of Conspiracy Cinema dedicated to analyzing a single event. The films selected are narrower in focus and shorter than is the standard for the genre, and tend to rely more heavily on recontextualizing footage from other media.

September 11, 2001

The Facts

At 8:46 AM on the morning of September 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 11 (Boston to Los Angeles) collides with the north face of the World Trade Center North Tower. Less than twenty minutes later, United Airlines Flight 175 (Boston to Los Angeles) crashes into the south face of the South Tower. American Airlines Flight 77 (Washington, DC to Los Angeles) crashes into the western side of the Pentagon just thirty minutes later. Just after 10:00 AM, United Airlines Flight 93 (New Jersey to San Francisco) crashes into a field in rural Pennsylvania. By 10:30 AM, both towers of the World Trade Center have collapsed and the twenty-first century has had its defining moment just nine months after it had begun.

The Official Version

The September 11 attacks were the work of nineteen terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda, a multinational organization of Islamic fundamentalists led by Osama Bin Laden. The assumed goal of the attacks was a symbolic strike at American financial influence (the World Trade Center) and military power (the Pentagon), as well as a direct response to the American presence in the Middle East and its continued support of Israel. Released in November 2002, the 9-11 Commission Report cited multiple instances of American intelligence failures leading up to the attacks and solely attributed the planning, funding, and execution of the attacks to al-Qaeda and its operatives.

The Conspiracy Theories

The conspiracy theories surrounding 9-11 are numerous and deal with every facet of the event. Some theorists offer comprehensive theories while others choose to focus on a single aspect on which to build

The attacks on the World Trade Center towers.

their case. Conspiracy cinema on 9-11 is just as varied in the theories it presents, although the nature of the format is such that most deal with comprehensive theories that offer alternative views on not only what happened but also those responsible and their motivations.

The most common comprehensive theory presented in these films is that 9-11 was a "False Flag" event. A False Flag or False Colors event is one designed to deceive the public into believing that an external enemy is responsible, when in reality it has been perpetrated by their own government. This approach to 9-11 takes the view that the attacks were either orchestrated or allowed to take place by a faction of the US government to promote their agenda. These films will often cite members of the Bush administration's involvement with the neo-conservative group The Project for a New American Century, whose literature calls for "a new Pearl Harbor" to usher in a period of perpetual war (Iraq-Afghanistan) and tighter social controls (the Patriot Act). False Flag theory proponents also cite Operation Northwoods, a proposed 1962 False Flag event in which terrorist activities in American cities would be blamed on Cuba in order to gain public support for a war, a conspiracy whose existence has been acknowledged by the US government. Other comprehensive theories often include the involvement of the agents of the New World Order in an effort to destabilize the United States in order to facilitate their one-world government agenda.

Individual 9-11 conspiracy theories, especially when removed from the context of a comprehensive theory, can be more diverse and imaginative. The most popular individual theory is that the collapse of the World Trade Center was the result of a controlled, pre-arranged demolition and not caused by the impact of the planes and the subsequent fires. Footage of the event plays a key role in this conspiracy theory, as

does the fact that the World Trade Center 7 building collapsed despite not being struck by planes. Other common individual theories include the "no-planes theory" (that holograms and missiles were used to fell the towers), the "drone theory" (that a remote-controlled drone aircraft was flown into the Pentagon), and the "plane-swap theory" (that the passengers and crew of any or all of the four hijacked flights were safely unloaded and replacement aircraft were used). Existing on the fringe are theories that involve UFOs, demonic or angelic intervention during the attacks, and even the use of a nuclear bomb under the World Trade Center.

Note: Films about September 11, 2001 abbreviate the date in a variety of ways: 9/11, 9-11, or 911 being the most common. For the sake of clarity, the titles of the film contain the style used by the filmmaker; all other references are written as 9-11.

REVIEWS

2001: THE YEAR WE MADE CONTACT (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Glenn Zarmanov
Production Company: We Are Change New Jersey

2001: The Year We Made Contact begins with our narrator (director Zarmanov) defining some key terms for the audience. He reads the definitions of "legend" and "myth" straight from their respective Wikipedia pages before digressing on a more esoteric topic, the concept of the axis mundi, or a connection between Earth and the heavens. Zarmanov doesn't state it directly, but it is clear that he is identifying the World Trade Center towers as a type of axis mundi, imbuing their existence—and their destruction—as deeply symbolic.

After several more minutes of Wikipedia definitions, *2001: The Year We Made Contact* shifts focus rather abruptly into the world of predictive programming, the concept that 9-11 was foretold in various media and other events. This disjointedness continues as the film segues into footage from other Conspiracy Cinema films, news footage, and Jesse Ventura's TruTV television show *Conspiracy Theory*. Most of this information has been presented elsewhere, with the notable exception of the short-lived sci-fi series *Seven Days*. This is the only instance

of which I'm aware that the show is referred to, and *2001: The Year We Made Contact* uses a collection of clips from the episode "Pinball Wizard" (airdate October 6, 1999), the plot of which involves the Pentagon being struck by a remote control missile. Its inclusion here is compelling proof of the predictive programming theory, and the filmmakers were wise to devote so much time to it. Less inspired are several minutes of the cartoon *Gargoyles*, the plot in question involving a group calling themselves "the Illuminati," a name and concept that would have been commonplace by time of the show's airing.

More effective is the use of an animated retelling of Plato's allegory of the cave, albeit more for its own merits than as proof of the film's claims. The final thirty minutes of the film consist of interview footage of attendees at a We Are Change New Jersey event, and footage of Zarmanov exploring a 9-11 memorial, Ground Zero, and the surrounding area. It is only at this point that we are presented with his theory on the true motives behind 9-11, which is that the towers were destroyed in a ritual designed to create a "stargate" between two universes. Though his claims may be on the fringe of 9-11 conspiracy thinking, the personal tone of this footage and the conviction with which Zarmanov relates this belief is compelling filmmaking. Were the entirety of *2001: The Year We Made Contact* structured similarly it would be both more entertaining and convincing. As it is, the amount of recycled footage and information makes these final moments scarcely worth the wait.

911: BIRTH OF TREASON (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Elliot Nesch
Production Company: Beitshalomministries.org

911: Birth of Treason has little to offer in the way of new information or perspectives that aren't already available in a host of other 9-11 Conspiracy Cinema films. We are treated to interviews with theorists filmed specifically for the documentary and footage of others that are appropriated wholesale from other sources, notably a lecture by Dr David Ray Griffin. The film more or less stays in line with Griffin's theory of a controlled demolition using thermite and the other interviews are merely there to build the case that the US government isn't being forthright in their explanation of the events on that day. In short, *911: Birth of Treason* consists mostly of arguments—and footage—that have

been presented more effectively elsewhere.

What distinguishes the film is the dramatic shift in tone that occurs for the film's final half hour. *911: Birth of Treason* is produced by the Christian pacifist organization Beit Shalom Ministries and the film concludes with a look at their beliefs and a solicitation for the viewer to become a born again Christian. While many Conspiracy Cinema films are made from a Christian perspective, it is rare for a film to dedicate such a large amount of time strictly to religious education. Those that do are typically far less tactful about it than *911: Birth of Treason*. This sermonizing, though unexpected, won't be offensive to viewers of any faith and, since it is relegated to the conclusion, those not inclined to listen can simply choose to turn the film off.

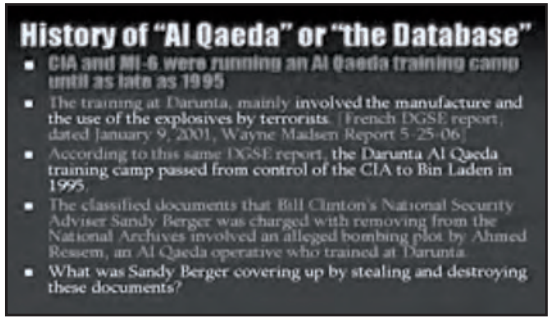
The Conspiracy Cinema film *Was 911 a Prophetic Warning?* is a forty minute interview with filmmaker Nesch in which he connects 9-11 conspiracy theory and Biblical prophecy to a greater degree than in *911: Birth of Treason*.

9-11: BLUEPRINT FOR TRUTH (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: Architects & Engineers for 9-11 Truth

Among the driest films in the Conspiracy Cinema canon, *9-11: Blueprint for Truth* was created by the group Architects & Engineers for 9-11 Truth and consists primarily of a lecture given by architect Richard Gage. Gage's position is that the towers were felled by pre-planted thermite explosives and maintains that this is the only event that could adequately explain melted steel and the free-fall speed of the towers' collapse. His lecture is intercut with footage from newscasts and other Conspiracy Cinema films, all of which are used as proof of the controlled demolition theory presented in the film.

The work of several physicists and other PhDs is used and the bulk of the film is dedicated to charts, graphs, and chemical analysis. It is all very intriguing material but *9-11: Blueprint for Truth* never gets to the conspiratorial heart of the matter: namely, the "who" and the "why" of its theory. The lack of this overshadows a lot of the film's thorough research and makes it appear as if it was done in a vacuum or simply for the sake of doing the analysis. *9-11: Blueprint for Truth* is an example of a film that attempts to be taken more seriously by not veering into the


History of "Al Qaeda" or "the Database"
CIA and MI-6 were running an Al Qaeda training camp until as late as 1995
The training at Darunta, mainly involved the manufacture and the use of the explosives by terrorists. [French DGSE report, dated January 9, 2001, Wayne Madsen Report 5-25-06]
According to this same DGSE report, the Darunta Al Qaeda training camp passed from control of the CIA to Bin Laden in 1995.
The classified documents that Bill Clinton's National Security Adviser Sandy Berger was charged with removing from the National Archives involved an alleged bombing plot by Ahmed Ressem, an Al Qaeda operative who trained at Darunta.
What was Sandy Berger covering up by stealing and destroying these documents?

9-11 Coincidence Theory*'s presentation.*

world of speculation. A commendable approach, but one that sacrifices much in the way of entertainment value.

9-11 COINCIDENCE THEORY (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Spencer Morgan
Production Company: Utah911Truth.com

The level of detail in Spencer Morgan's *9-11 Coincidence Theory* goes far beyond that of its peers and, indeed, well beyond the tolerance level of the average viewer. The film is simply a slide show presentation narrated by Morgan and feels more akin to a university lecture than the typically bombastic world of Conspiracy Cinema. That being said, anyone in search of a carefully researched and fully annotated examination of the conspiracy theories on 9-11 need look no further.

Morgan begins with a listing of notable names who question 9-11's official story, sticking primarily to journalists and politicians, and avoiding mention of any of the more popular conspiracy theorists. For Morgan, one's feelings about 9-11 boil down to whether or not they choose to believe in coincidences or conspiracies, and the first thirty minutes of the film is used to establish how many coincidences one would need to believe to accept the official version of events. Rather than using the remainder of the film to establish proof of a conspiracy, Morgan takes the opposite approach and begins dissecting the official version and what he and other theorists see as the problems with it.

Most of *9-11 Coincidence Theory* is highly analytical and things like air velocity, melting temperatures, and descent speeds are explained in exacting detail. Morgan at no point tries to use any persuasive techniques, but manages to be persuasive through overkill. The viewer will

be so overloaded with facts and figures that they're likely to believe him simply because mounting a counterargument would be too arduous. That certainly isn't to discount the strength of the information presented. If anything, Morgan should be commended for adding hard data to a niche of Conspiracy Cinema that is rife with baseless speculation. Dull and sometimes impossibly dense, *9-11 Coincidence Theory* is an invaluable resource for the hardcore 9-11 conspiracy theorist but too daunting a work for anyone else.

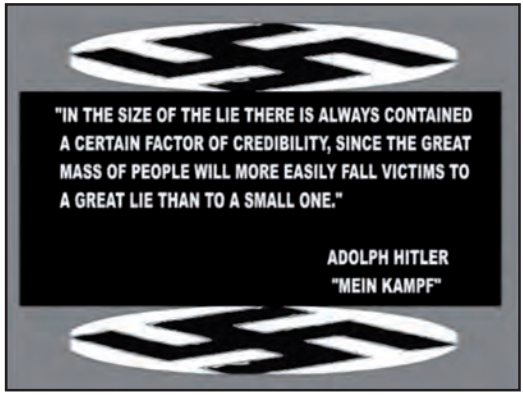
911: THE EXPLOSIVE REALITY (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: None listed

The opening crawl of *911: the Explosive Reality* boldly states, "This film was not made for entertainment." Most conspiracy theorists would disagree, however, as the film presents a plethora of clips dealing with September 11, including several that are typically omitted by other films. As with many 9-11 Conspiracy Cinema films, it consists exclusively of footage from other sources, but where *911: the Explosive Reality* distinguishes itself is in its production quality. Many familiar clips are shown here in dramatically higher quality than in other films and *the Explosive Reality* has exceptional clarity, even when enlarging parts of the frame for detail. For most viewers, it will be like seeing this footage for the first time.

The film contains no narration, only on-screen titles, and leans heavily towards the controlled demolition theory. While other films rely on experts, statistics, and schematics to debunk the official version, *911: the Explosive Reality* only uses the footage of the collapse as proof. It is a surprisingly effective technique. Absent of any external guidance by a narrator, the viewers are left to play the role of investigators themselves; therefore they study the images far closer than they would under other circumstances. Every flash of light and every speck of debris then takes on a far greater importance to them regardless of whether they are trying to prove or debunk the official version. *911: the Explosive Reality* was obviously made with a conspiratorial agenda, but its subtle approach will prevent viewers from feeling as if they are being led towards any one conclusion.

Over the course of its two hours, *911: the Explosive Reality* applies


"IN THE SIZE OF THE LIE THERE IS ALWAYS CONTAINED
A CERTAIN FACTOR OF CREDIBILITY, SINCE THE GREAT
MASS OF PEOPLE WILL MORE EASILY FALL VICTIMS TO
A GREAT LIE THAN TO A SMALL ONE."
ADOLPH HITLER
"MEIN KAMPF"

The introductory screen to Hilder's 911: the Greatest Lie Ever Sold.

the same level of detail to footage from Shanksville and the Pentagon as it does to the World Trade Center attacks, making it one of the few films to treat all four incidents equally. A closing title card confesses that the anonymous filmmaker(s) included subliminal red flashes in some scenes to induce fear and anger in the viewer, presumably to be directed towards the government and the media. After viewing the film a second time, I was unable to spot any instance of this occurring, however. If it is true, it is regrettable. It would be disingenuous towards those viewers who aren't conspiracy theorists and unnecessary for those who are.

911: THE GREATEST LIE EVER SOLD (2004)

Filmmaker/Director: Anthony J Hilder
Production Company: Free World Film Works

Conspiracy theorist Anthony J Hilder has been active in conspiracy circles since the late sixties and has worked as a bit part actor on television, a record company owner, and a film studio executive. Hilder was also one of the earliest theorists to make the leap into Conspiracy Cinema (in the early nineties) and several of his other films appear elsewhere in this book.

A passing familiarity with Hilder's body of work is needed to understand why he would choose to begin his *911: the Greatest Lie Ever Sold* with an image as jarring as a quote from *Mein Kampf* letterboxed by Nazi swastikas. The lengthy film (over two hours) is a continuation of Hilder's theories of a Luciferian/Nazi society aiming to control the

world. He posits that George W Bush and other members of the US government are part of a global "Brotherhood of Death," that 9-11 was a ritual sacrifice, and that the ultimate goal is the total enslavement of humanity.

Over the course of *911: the Greatest Lie Ever Sold*, Hilder attempts to prove his claims via repetition but offers little in the way of proof or original research. The familiar footage of that day culled from news broadcasts appears often but Hilder, who appears onscreen as the "host" of the documentary throughout, never directly addresses any of it, nor does he ever clearly define his own theory of the events. *911: the Greatest Lie Ever Sold* appears to have been intended for an audience who already shares Hilder's views as at no time does he attempt to persuade viewers and rarely are sources given for the ideas he presents as accepted facts.

911: the Greatest Lie Ever Sold fails as a persuasive work but does manage to be one of the more entertaining entries in the Conspiracy Cinema canon. Hilder is an eccentric character and the fact that he is onscreen for the majority of the film is a huge boon to its entertainment value. He's prone to use such colorful phrases as "Hollywood is the cancer on the hemorrhoid on the ass of the whore of America"—complete with reverb effect—and other *bon mots* like "FB-Lie" with great frequency and liberally uses the sudden zoom when he's making a point.

Ultimately, the undoing of *911: the Greatest Lie Ever Sold* as an effective piece of Conspiracy Cinema lies more in its erratic structure than anything else. The film changes topics frequently and without warning, the subjects interviewed are included for their name recognition rather than their ability to contribute to the work, and the film does not remain focused solely on 9-11 or Hilder's theories about the event. Hilder successfully proves that he and others are convinced in the existence of an evil cult bent on world domination, but it is unlikely that you will be after watching this film.

Other Hilder films on 9-11 include *IllumiNAZI 911* and a filmed lecture, *Thieves in the Temple & the 911 Lies*.

911 MISSING LINKS (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: John Allen Martinson Jr
Production Company: 911MissingLinks.com

Billing itself as "the definitive truth about 9-11," *911 Missing Links* is a filmic representation of the prevalent theory of Jewish responsibility for the attacks. Not only does it purport to have the truth about the event, but it states that all other conspiracy theorists are wrong, having been misled by Israeli intelligence to throw them off the trail. For *911 Missing Links*, 9-11 is the culmination of centuries of Jewish atrocities against the gentile world and anyone who doesn't believe this is part of the conspiracy.

The film begins by giving a brief summary of Jewish aggression against the United States in the twentieth century, spending most of its time on the Israeli bombing of the *USS Liberty* during the Six Day War. The incident is seen as a tragic accident by both countries, but the filmmakers view it as a cover-up between Israel and closet Jews in the US government. In the world of *911 Missing Links*, everyone is Jewish, so instead of exculpating the Bush administration of wrongdoing, it accuses them of disguising their Jewish origins.

The anti-Semitism in the film may be too pronounced for most viewers to get past the first twenty minutes, but those that do will see examinations of several 9-11 fringe events that are typically ignored by other Conspiracy Cinema film. First among these is the report that five "Middle Eastern" men were seen dancing and videotaping the attacks on the World Trade Center. The actual ethnicity of these men is in dispute, as are the reports that they were detained and released by authorities. More widely reported was an incident where a white van was stopped near the George Washington Bridge on suspicions it may have been carrying a truck bomb. The three Israeli citizens inside were detained for several months but ultimately released without being charged. Per *911 Missing Links*, their release was a direct order from the CIA.

911 Missing Links never relents from its torrent of anti-Jewish rhetoric. It makes the same mistake that many similar anti-Semitic films do: that is, not clearly distinguishing between the actions of the state of Israel and the whole of the Jewish people worldwide. One is guilty simply by virtue of their birth, per the film, and anyone in the government whose ethnicity is unclear is labeled a Jew as if doing so proved that they were a part of the conspiracy. *911 Missing Links* contains some compelling information about Mossad involvement in 9-11, but ultimately it gets lost in the unending sea of racism in the film.

The website for *911 Missing Links* contains an essay stating that conspiracy theorists Alex Jones, Jason Bermas, Webster Tarpley, and Jim Marrs are "disinfo" agents and members of something the filmmakers call the "Jewish Crime Network."

9-11: THE ROAD TO TYRANNY (2002)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Jones' first post-9-11 film sees him making some adjustments to his filmmaking style but not his message. As referenced in the title, the encroachment of tyranny into the American government is still his main focus. For Jones, 9-11 wasn't the watershed moment of conspiracy theory that it was for other Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers, but instead a continuation of trends he'd been addressing for years. 9-11 only plays a small part in *9-11: the Road to Tyranny* and the majority of the film takes a closer look at the impact of that day on civil liberties than it does the events themselves.

Approximately half of the film's running time is dedicated to exposing other False Flag events throughout history, beginning with Nero's persecution of Christians after the burning of Rome and ending with the Oklahoma City Bombing. It is at this point that Jones arrives at 9-11 but addresses conspiracy theories briefly, only touching on the collapse of Building 7 before moving to other topics. Jones is more concerned with the aftermath of the event, in particular the USA Patriot Act and other legislation passed in the weeks and months afterward. *9-11: the Road to Tyranny* then becomes a "greatest hits" of sorts for Jones, incorporating footage from his earlier *Police State* films as evidence of 9-11 simply being another step in the gradual slide towards tyranny. Jones concludes with a look at surveillance techniques including the infamous implanted RFID chip before taking on topics rarely seen in his work: global warming, forced vaccinations, chemtrails, and food additives.

9-11: the Road to Tyranny has very little information not already available on Jones' previous films but is an interesting work for examining his oeuvre as a whole. This film marks the beginnings of a change in his style from the amateurish look of his earlier films to the Hollywoodesque polish of his more recent work. *Road to Tyranny* also marked a change in how Jones presented himself. He is off-camera for most of the

film, a drastic change from his omnipresence in earlier works. It allows the viewers to take him more seriously than they would have in previous films. There is only one instance of footage of Jones screaming at someone—an unsuspecting news anchor in this case—making him appear less like an attention seeker and more like a legitimate journalist: a fact that makes his message far more palatable than ever before.

Jones has made several films on the events of 9-11, each taking only a slightly different approach to the material. *Masters of Terror Exposed* (also 2002) contains much of the same information and clips as *Road to Tyranny* in a lecture-type format. *Matrix of Evil* (2003) discusses the same topics, but contains the field interviews missing from the two previous films. 2005's *Martial Law 9-11: Rise of the Police State* links Jones' New World Order police state theories to 9-11 more concretely, and uses a hybrid format of interviews, clips, and lecture pieces. *Terrorstorm: a History of Government Sponsored Terrorism* (2006, 2nd edition 2007) discusses False Flag attacks throughout history from the vantage point of 9-11, and is perhaps the closest to an authentic documentary of his 9-11 films. Finally, Jones is absent from most of 2008's *The 9-11 Chronicles Part 1: Truth Rising*, a film that is comprised almost entirely of footage shot by activists in the 9-11 Truth Movement.

911 TABOO—"THE WTC PLANE FRAUD" (year unknown)

Filmmaker/Director: Genghis6199
Production Company: None listed

911 Taboo opens with an ingenious montage through which the entireties of the film's theories are summarized in a few seconds. The Naudet "first strike" footage of Flight 11 hitting the North Tower plays, but the soundtrack is substituted with audio recordings of eyewitnesses describing seeing a missile or other unknown object hit the building, but, tellingly, never mentioning an airplane. *911 Taboo* is based in the "no planes" school of 9-11 conspiracy theory, and filmmaker Genghis6199 has carefully selected footage from mainstream media outlets that proves his claim that no on-site witnesses stated they saw a plane. With a running time of just over thirty minutes, it is clear that the film does not include every instance of a 9-11 eyewitness speaking to the media and the audience will easily catch on to the selection bias at work. According to the film, only people watching television saw the

planes hit the towers, meaning that the footage was edited to include planes that weren't actually there. The "how," "who," and "why" of this theory are not addressed, however.

911 Taboo all but abandons the footage manipulation aspects of its theory by its midpoint and begins to take a more analytical approach to debunking the official story. Several minutes of the film are dedicated to crash footage of various types of vehicles: cars, buses, trains, and, of course, airplanes. The point being made is that the filmmaker finds it unlikely that the largely aluminum commercial planes would have been able to penetrate the steel structure of the World Trade Center. It is a compelling argument and one that is surprisingly absent from most of 9-11 Conspiracy Cinema.

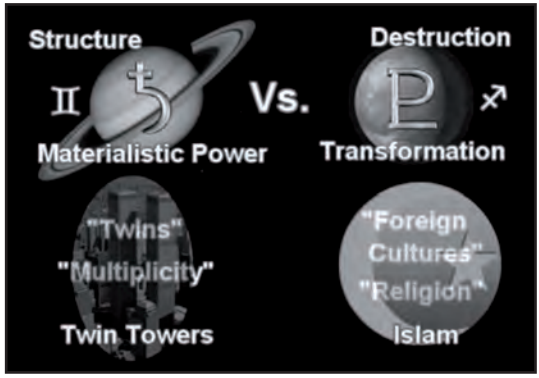
911 Taboo is infinitely watchable, travels at a quick pace, and shows that the anonymous filmmaker Genghis6199 is more talented than your typical amateur Conspiracy Cinema director. There are some especially inspired moments on the soundtrack, which sees the director gleefully ignoring copyright laws to ironically pair classic tunes such as Patsy Cline's "Crazy" to the "faked" footage of planes hitting the towers. The "crash physics" portion of *911 Taboo* is ultimately more convincing than its "no planes" section. The two are presented as inseparable from each other, however, so most viewers will remain sceptical about both.

911—THE ULTIMATE CON(SPIRACY) (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Lucus
Production Company: None listed

Filmmaker "Lucus" starts off his take on 9-11 by invoking his rights under the Fair Use Act, Title 17 and stating the film is for educational purposes. It is good that he did, because *911—the Ultimate Con(spiracy)* exclusively consists of footage appropriated from other sources, including a sizeable helping from other Conspiracy Cinema films. Lucus adds nothing new to the footage apart from a title card dedicating the film to the memories of those that died on that day, but he does credit his sources at the film's closing.

911—the Ultimate Con(spiracy) consists primarily of mainstream news broadcasts from 9-11 and the days following. Rather than including everything available, there is a definite agenda at work in the selection of the clips. Lucus has selected any moment that in some way con-



Do You Believe in Magick? *presents 9-11 starcharts.*

tradicts the official story, be it an interview with a survivor who mentions the word "bomb" or a CNN report about discrepancies in the official timeline of that day. The bulk of the news footage included in the film is dedicated to celebrities and other media personalities who question the official story of 9-11. Charlie Sheen's involvement in the 9-11 Truth Movement is given a substantial amount of time, as are lesser known celeb conspiracy theorists like Rosie O'Donnell and Sharon Stone.

While *911—the Ultimate Con(spiracy)* doesn't offer us any new conspiracy theories or corroborating evidence for existing ones, its exclusive use of primary sources is an effective technique. By only using "found footage" from other sources, the film also gets the opportunity to present the viewer with some seldom seen clips, notably a CSPAN-2 segment featuring former CIA agent and activist Ray McGovern. McGovern makes a strong case for a conspiracy on 9-11 as well as a host of other ongoing conspiracies in the US government. Conspiracy completists will want to digest as much of McGovern's talk as possible, but may not be willing to sit through almost two hours of overly familiar footage to get to it.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGICK? 9-11 AS MASONIC RITUAL

(assumed 2005–2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: Merseyside Truth

Repetition is the main rhetorical device employed by our dulcet-toned narrator in *Do You Believe in Magick? 9-11 as Masonic Ritual*. The titular phrase is uttered countless times but its usage is eclipsed by the

phrase "as above, so below," which is invoked with an almost distracting frequency. The phrase originates from Hermes Trismegistus' *The Emerald Tablet*, an alchemical text that influenced the works of Sir Isaac Newton, Carl Jung, and Aleister Crowley, and more recently appeared in Rhonda Byrne's bestseller *The Secret*. "As above, so below" is also a key phrase for Kabbalists and Freemasons, the latter of which *Do You Believe in Magick?* seeks to prove as the perpetrators of the events of September 11, 2001.

Essentially, the film consists of an extended horoscope for the World Trade Center and how their destruction was engineered to reflect celestial events of that day by Freemasons, for whom the literal creation of an "as above, so below" scenario would have been important. On 9-11, Saturn and Pluto were in opposition to each other, believed to symbolize materialism and religion being in conflict, something reflected in the official story of devout Muslims attacking the symbols of American capitalism. *Do You Believe in Magick?* goes into an impressive amount of detail explaining the multiple interpretations of the planetary events of the day; an astrological version of 9-11 coincidence theory.

Per the film, the World Trade Center was constructed with the knowledge that it would be destroyed on September 11, 2001 as a part of a grand Masonic ritual. To explain this theory, the film goes into a good bit of depth regarding the history of the towers that is omitted from other 9-11 documentaries and does a convincing job of proving the possible symbolic interpretations of the towers, but fails to adequately prove an ulterior motive for their creation. Credulity is stretched even more by claims that the goal of the ritual was to open a portal between our reality and another dimension, a concept it introduces matter-of-factly and quickly drops without explanation.

Do You Believe in Magick? will be enthralling for those looking for an astrological take on the events of 9-11 but ultimately the film offers nothing more than conjecture. The filmmakers blame the destruction of the World Trade Center on the Freemasons, but never elaborate on how it happened or the specific personages involved. Flight 77 and Flight 93 are never mentioned, which invites questions as to how they fit into the elaborate and carefully planned ritual magick described in the film. Those without preexisting knowledge of astrology and the occult may find the film hard to follow at times, but it is doubtful that even knowledgeable viewers will be convinced of the film's claims.

EVERYBODY'S GOT TO LEARN SOMETIME (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: John J Albanese
Production Company: Planet Pop X Films

Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime begins with a declaration of honesty, readily admitting that the topics it will cover have been explored in great detail in books, on websites, and in other Conspiracy Cinema films. It's a refreshing change of pace from the standard tone of the genre, and the film's forthrightness will likely make viewers more receptive to the message that follows. The stated goal of the film is to consolidate the "unanswered questions" about 9-11 and to serve as a quick overview of the daunting amount of information on the topic. An admirable goal, to be certain, but one that is by no means unique to the film. Any analysis of the film must therefore address the question of whether or not *Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime* accomplishes this goal more succinctly or coherently than similar films. It does.

Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime's 9-11 conspiracy theory recap is thorough, well-realized, and, most importantly, brief. Around the ten minute mark, the film takes a surprising turn, presenting information that is largely ignored by the bulk of 9-11 Conspiracy Cinema, making for an immensely compelling documentary. The film begins its examination of 9-11 with the 2000 Presidential election, an event with several conspiracy theories of its own (see also: PRESIDENTIAL CONSPIRACIES). The controversy surrounding the election originated in Florida, a state that is also closely linked to several of the 9-11 hijackers. *Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime* finds links between the illegal drug trade and Huffman Aviation, the school where reported 9-11 mastermind Mohammed Atta was trained. Huffman was owned by Wally Hilliard, a mysterious figure believed to have links to the CIA, the illegal drug trade, and George W and Jeb Bush, then Governor of Florida. It is the assertion of the film that Jeb Bush took a supervisory role in the training and planning of 9-11 by allowing Hilliard and Atta to operate freely in Florida.

The film digresses from this tantalizing topic briefly to explore the more familiar details of the botched Able Danger program and to investigate examples of predictive and reflective programming in the media. *Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime* resumes its tactic of investigating lesser-known theories by presenting evidence linking disgraced conservative lobbyist Jack Abramoff to Atta, citing reports of Atta and

others being frequent guests of Abramoff's SunCruz Casino gaming ships. This, coupled with the aforementioned ties to Jeb Bush, combines to make a strong case for malfeasance on the part of the Bush administration. Even if one believes the official version of events, there is a tragic irony in the fact that the lead terrorist was connected to a White House insider and was, at most, only two degrees removed from the President himself.

The makers of *Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime* ascribe to the official version of the events on 9-11 as well, but place the ultimate responsibility for those events with the Bush administration. There are no discussions of controlled demolitions, Pentagon missiles, or small nuclear warheads in the film, a fact that again will make its claims more believable to the average viewer. The film operates primarily in a journalistic mode, favoring well-documented sources over conjecture and avoiding wild speculation as much as possible. *Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime* is a well-organized film that eschews trying to convince the audience of its claims in favor of encouraging them to do their own research. Detailed yet quickly paced, the film will appeal to newcomers and seasoned conspiracists equally.

FACE THE FACTS (year unknown)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: 911 Truth Bristol

A short film constructed of various bits and pieces from other Conspiracy Cinema works. *Face the Facts* adds nothing new to the footage but is exceedingly well edited and inserts subliminal messages—such as a flashing "TRUTH"—into the clips it uses. The film manages to be even more derivative than its peers by incorporating a sequence from another Conspiracy Cinema film that uses a clip from yet another Conspiracy Cinema film.

THE GREAT DECEPTION (2002)

THE GREAT CONSPIRACY: THE 9-11 NEWS SPECIAL YOU NEVER SAW (2004)

Filmmaker/Director: Barrie Zwicker
Production Company: Zwicker/Vision TV

Canadian media analyst Zwicker is credited with making one of the first Conspiracy Cinema films on 9-11, *The Great Deception*, in 2002. That film and its sequel, *The Great Conspiracy*, ask many of the same questions about 9-11 and particularly the media's handling of the event. For Zwicker, the media's lack of curiosity about many important questions left unanswered by the official version is nothing short of treasonous and possibly even identifies them as co-conspirators.

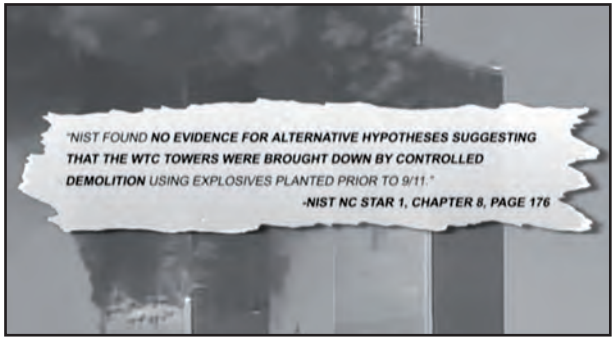
Both films are interesting time capsules of early 9-11 conspiracy theory and this is especially true for *The Great Deception*. In the film we see the genesis of many concepts that would go on to be staples of 9-11 Conspiracy Cinema such as Operation Northwoods and the CIA's relationship with Bin Laden prior to 9-11. Zwicker shouldn't be credited with originating any of these theories, though, but his influence over how they are presented in Conspiracy Cinema is clear. *The Great Conspiracy* updates many of the ideas from *The Great Deception* and maintains its predecessor's focus on the likelihood of government involvement over specifics about the day.

Zwicker was a long-time television newsman, so both films are structured like a television news program with Zwicker sitting behind a desk throughout. Unfortunately this setting works against the film as it seems too affected and, to a certain degree, silly, particularly since Zwicker reappears after each clip wearing a different sweater in *The Great Deception*. His pleasant demeanor and eloquent presentation lend an air of believability to the proceedings and help to balance things out. You'll feel more comfortable believing Zwicker than some of the less polished Conspiracy Cinema personalities, and that fact alone is likely the reason that these two films are among the most cannibalized in the genre.

LOOSE CHANGE (2005–2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Dylan Avery (Director), Jason Bermas, Korey Rowe, Matthew Brown, Alex Jones
Production Company: Louder than Words, Microcinema International (*An American Coup*, 2009 only)

Independently produced Conspiracy Cinema has existed since the early days of home video, approximately the same time that filmmakers Dylan Avery and Jason Bermas were born. It is somewhat strange


"NIST FOUND NO EVIDENCE FOR ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES SUGGESTING
THAT THE WTC TOWERS WERE BROUGHT DOWN BY CONTROLLED
DEMOLITION USING EXPLOSIVES PLANTED PRIOR TO 9/11."
-NIST NC STAR 1, CHAPTER 8, PAGE 176

The official story recontextualized in Loose Change.

then that it would be their film *Loose Change* that would become many people's first exposure to such films and the standard bearer for the genre as a whole. What *Loose Change* did for Conspiracy Cinema cannot be overestimated and it would be apt to call it the genre's *Deep Throat*. Like *Deep Throat*, *Loose Change* was less innovative than simply just well-timed, becoming the accepted—and acceptable—public face for a marginalized art form.

Loose Change's take on the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon differ little from those put forth in previous films and books. To wit, the film ascribes to the inside job, controlled demolition, and Pentagon missile theories, with the only unique viewpoint put forth being that the passengers of Flight 93 were unloaded at a secret location prior to the plane's crash, a theory not originated by the filmmakers, but one seldom seen in film. The Bush administration is depicted as both the orchestrator and perpetrator of the attacks, and the Project for a New American Century's frequently cited position paper (see CHAPTER INTRODUCTION) is given considerable attention. *Loose Change* presents the attacks as a pretext for war-for-profit in the Middle East, an idea made all the more chilling because the film makes the decision to kill American citizens a purely financial one since it doesn't frame it in the context of the Illuminati, the New World Order, or other quasi-religious groups.

Anyone who had seen a conspiracy documentary on 9-11 prior to *Loose Change* would likely not have been impressed by the claims it makes or the proof it offers for them. However, to truly understand its importance, we must look at the context and method in which its information is presented. *Loose Change* is the first important documentary of any type of the "YouTube Age." Those who saw the film initially

did so for free from their computers. The film is fast paced, well-edited, and decidedly aimed at the under-thirty crowd. It presents information in short, easily digestible bites, in much the same manner as a modern news program. While a large amount of information is covered, none of it is focused on for more than a moment or two, changing topics before the viewer gets bored or, perhaps more importantly, before they have time to process and question the information presented.

Along those same lines, *Loose Change* was one of the first Conspiracy Cinema films to go through a process of revision. The initial version appeared online in April 2005 and was followed by *Loose Change: 2nd Edition* in December of that year. *Loose Change: 2nd Edition Recut* was released in 2006 with *Loose Change: Final Cut* being released in 2007 with a significantly larger budget (reportedly $200,000) and a longer running time at over two hours. To date, the last produced version of the film is *Loose Change 9-11: an American Coup*, released on DVD in 2009. The changes between versions are largely insignificant to the overall message of the work and the main difference between the longest entry *Final Cut* and its companions is solely the amount of time it devotes to each topic.

Loose Change is also important because it did not require the viewer to be an ardent conspiracy theorist to stumble upon it or to follow the film's message. There was no need to order a VHS or DVD by mail from the back of a conspiracy theory newsletter or be actively researching 9-11 conspiracy theories to find the film; therefore, *Loose Change* was the first and only exposure to Conspiracy Cinema for many viewers. In this regard, *Loose Change* benefits greatly from the audience's unfamiliarity with the genre. The average person most likely equates documentary cinema with truth to a certain degree and, thus, is more likely to take *Loose Change*'s claims as facts.

As the most well-known Conspiracy Cinema film, *Loose Change* is also the most widely criticized, drawing fire from everyone from the US State Department to other 9-11 conspiracy theorists. The criticisms from all sides are essentially identical and accuse *Loose Change* of being sloppily researched and containing many "facts" which are easily debunked. Those on the "official version" side of the argument believe that these claims are refutable simply because they are not true, while conspiracy theorists often accuse Avery, Bermas, *et al* of being agents of disinformation, intentionally creating an easily debunked group of facts in an effort to discredit the 9-11 Truth Movement. The film is

less popular among conspiracy theorists than it is among the general public because of this and because it presents information from other theorists and films without proper accreditation, particularly the film *In Plane Sight*.

Loose Change remains the most well-known Conspiracy Cinema film, despite being considerably dated by the standards of the genre. Its continual popularity is due to the fact that, whether you agree with it or not, it is hard to ignore how compelling and accessible the film is. It is not the best researched example of 9-11 conspiracy theories available, but it can be said that it is the most well-made and influential. Several longtime conspiracy filmmakers changed their formats in the wake of *Loose Change* to more closely match its style, most notably Alex Jones, not to mention the countless individuals it inspired to make their own films. Those of you searching for concrete, irrefutable proof of a 9-11 conspiracy will be ill-served by the film, but in terms of the quality of the product, *Loose Change* may very well be the zenith of Conspiracy Cinema.

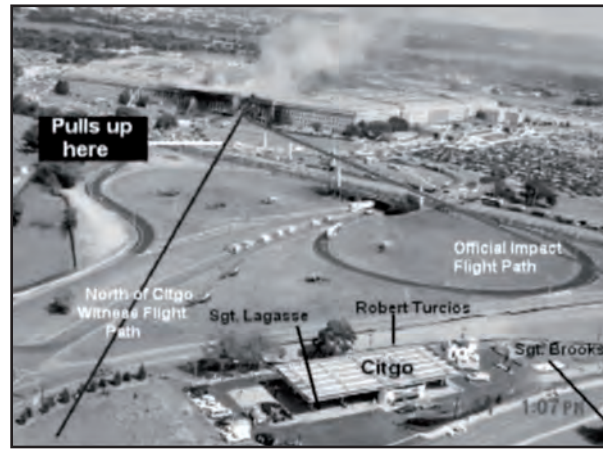
Loose Change filmmaker Jason Bermas returned to Conspiracy Cinema in 2008 with the Alex Jones' produced *Fabled Enemies*. It is also a 9-11 conspiracy film, this time focusing exclusively on possible government involvement with al-Qaeda.

THE PENTACON: SMOKING GUN EDITION (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Craig Ranke
Production Company: ThePentaCon.com/Citizen Investigation Team

The PentaCon is one of the only films dedicated exclusively to the 9-11 attack on the Pentagon. It is notable for that reason alone, but it also makes a good showing for itself by relying primarily on eyewitness interviews as proof of its conspiracy theory. Filmmaker Ranke is very methodical in his approach, picking credible witnesses (police officers, security guards) and interviewing them where they were located during the event. It is a masterfully persuasive technique, since a sceptic would be faced with not only refuting Ranke's conspiracy theory but discrediting the eyewitnesses as well.

More than half of *The PentaCon* is dedicated to these interviews. At times it can be a bit repetitive, but that repetition is the basis of the film's theory. Every eyewitness tells essentially the same story and



The PentaCon*'s flight path analysis.*

describes the plane taking the same flight path—one that contradicts the official version of events. *The PentaCon*'s theory is that the plane was simply a distraction for a missile strike. The eyewitnesses tell of the plane flying over rather than hitting the Pentagon, meaning that all evidence corroborating the official version (downed light poles, *etc*) had to have been faked.

The PentaCon's theory may be a difficult one to accept, but its presentation is helped immensely by focusing on only this one aspect of 9-11. Director Ranke has made an intelligent film that is difficult to disprove as it seems unlikely that the four individuals interviewed would have all shared the same mistaken impression on that day. *The PentaCon* will successfully make viewers question the official story but will ultimately only spawn more questions. Since the downed light poles and damaged vehicles would have needed to be faked to fit the official version, it is plausible that there would be an eyewitness to the creation of these fakes or at least their placement at the scene but, unfortunately, *The PentaCon* is unable to provide us with such a witness.

THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT 911 (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Dimitri Khalezov
Production Company: 911thology.com

Dimitri Khalezov, former member of the Soviet Union's "Special Control Service," a top secret group dedicated to detecting atomic detonations, shares his views on the events of 9-11. Though primarily an

Evidence of a nuke? The Real Truth about 911.

interview with some added documentary footage, *The Real Truth About 911* is included here because of the uniqueness of Khalezov's theory and its widespread dissemination. Mr Khalezov relates in belabored English his belief that the collapse of the World Trade Center towers on 9-11 was actually caused by a small thermonuclear device located beneath the towers. He offers extensive proof for this claim, including many diagrams, detailed photographs of the towers, and his own expertise about nuclear devices.

Perhaps the most unique thing about Khalezov's theory is that it more closely conforms to the official version of 9-11 than practically any other conspiracy theory and absolves the US government of any wrongdoing. In Khalezov's theory, Bin Laden and al-Qaeda were responsible for the attacks on the WTC, and that the "objects" that struck them contained nuclear devices, which necessitated the government to order the towers be brought down by atomic devices placed in the base of the buildings during their construction. I use the term "objects" because Khalezov never makes it fully clear whether or not he believes that planes were used or that the towers were struck by missiles or another type of device. His book on the subject, *The Third Truth About 9/11*, is subtitled *Defending the US Government* because he maintains that the decision to bring the towers down saved the millions of lives that would have been lost had an atomic device detonated above Manhattan.

Should you be brave enough to take on Khalezov's four-and-a-half hour interview, you'll be presented with one of the most exhaustive

looks at a 9-11 fringe conspiracy theory put to film. *The Real Truth About 911*'s presentation leaves much to be desired since it relies almost entirely on Khalezov's interview. He is so convinced that he's right, he doesn't spend very much time trying to convince anyone else. In fact, a significant chunk of the film is spent on digressions where Khalezov attempts to debunk the theories of other 9-11 theorists. The world of Conspiracy Cinema is a highly competitive one but, given the nature of his claims, Mr Khalezov would be better served defending his theory before attacking those of others.

SEPTEMBER 11: EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Eric Hufschmid
Production Company: The Lone Lantern Society of Chicago

Many Conspiracy Cinema films incorporate footage from other works, but *September 11: Evidence to the Contrary* is notable to the degree to which it indulges in this cinematic cannibalism. Only fifteen minutes of the hour long film is original footage; the remaining forty-five are lifted from Alex Jones' *Martial Law 9-11: Rise of the Police State*. *Evidence to the Contrary* doesn't try to hide this fact, but its filmmakers do add their own logo to the bottom of the frame. That logo is their only contribution to the footage, meaning the only purpose of this film is to draw attention to Jones' already sufficiently promoted body of work.

SEPTEMBER CLUES (2008 [latest version])

Filmmaker/Director: Simon Shack
Production Company: SeptemberClues.info

Sound and video engineer Simon Shack applied the skills learned in his chosen profession to his analysis of September 11. The resulting film and website, *September Clues*, is a powerful and surprisingly compelling documentary detailing the most bizarre of all the 9-11 conspiracy theories. *September Clues* is the most important Conspiracy Cinema film dealing with the "no planes" theory: the theory that airplanes did not hit the World Trade Center on 9-11 but were digitally inserted into news footage to trick viewers. It is a strange assumption and one that even the tinfoil hat crowd scoff at, yet when viewed with an open mind,

September Clues *purports to expose the 9-11 hoax.*

Shack's film is deftly persuasive. The point of Conspiracy Cinema is to make the viewer question the official story and *September Clues* takes that a step beyond, causing the viewer to question their own eyes and memory.

September Clues begins with a look at the five recordings of Flight 175 hitting the South Tower, immediately jumping into detailed, frame-by-frame analysis of each. One of the main arguments in the film is based on an image that barely lasts a half-second and consists of a cluster of pixels that would measure less than an inch on most viewers' television screens. Fox's *Good Day NY* helicopter footage of the second strike shows what appears to be the nose of Flight 175 exiting intact from the other side of the tower, the footage then quickly fading to black. Since such an event would be impossible, *September Clues* establishes its main point that the plane must therefore not be real but simply the image of an airplane. Shack then shows us step-by-step how that could have been accomplished by video-editing equipment and why the "error" of the plane's nose exiting the building would have happened and the attempted concealment of this error by the inexplicable fade to black. *September Clues* applies the same analysis to the other network footage and remarks on the unlikely—and chilling—coincidence that at least one other network had a fade to black at the exact same moment.

The same treatment is given to the Naudet first strike footage, all of the amateur recordings of the tower strikes and collapses, the Flight 93 crash, and the Pentagon attack. The same conclusion is reached regarding all: missiles and other explosive devices were used in the attacks and all video footage and still photography have been manipulated to hide this fact. *September Clues*' investigation is not limited to simply the visual evidence from that day and the film questions the

probability that hijacker Satam al Suqami's passport would be found days later with only minimal damage.

One of the film's most well developed arguments concerns the eyewitnesses interviewed by the media and the amateur videographers who filmed the event. Essentially all of those interviewed were connected to the media in some way, be it as a staffer themselves or as the spouse of an employee. The film concludes that this "controlled" reporting and the fact that the individual's relationship with the media was never mentioned is evidence of media complicity. Furthermore, all of the amateur recordings were made by people with media experience—camerapersons, photographers, and digital artists. This claim appears to be little more than a coincidence given the high likelihood that those individuals would have had a camera on them and the presence of mind to film the event. However, *September Clues* makes the viewer question what they are seeing yet again by presenting evidence that these amateur films have been professionally edited and contain eerie similarities.

The information presented in *September Clues* is shocking to say the least but is presented in such a manner as to give the most ardent sceptic pause. To believe the film's theory is to believe that one's own memory of the event is incorrect: that you, in fact, did not see what you think you saw. It is a difficult proposition and one that most viewers will be unable to believe. The "clues" presented by Shack are incredibly intriguing, however. All of the footage used in the film is readily available online for independent review on news sites, YouTube, and on Shack's site, SeptemberClues.info. Though *September Clues* presents a theory that is extreme even by Conspiracy Cinema standards, it is difficult to immediately discount most of the information presented and—more importantly—impossible not to become engrossed by the film.

WHO KILLED JOHN O'NEILL? (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Ty Rauber & Ryan Thurston
Production Company: A Dead Art Film

Who Killed John O'Neill? is quite possibly the most bizarre film in the Conspiracy Cinema canon and yet it is also one of the most engaging and intelligent as well. A cross between a documentary and a one-person play, the film stars Ryan Thurston as "the Man," who sits in his

bedroom pondering the titular question. He is interrupted by a mysterious phone call, and through the course of his dialogue with the anonymous caller the Man traces the genesis of 9-11 back several decades through a web of conspiracies. On this trek through conspiracy theory history, the Man is joined by several others—"Paranoid," "Cynic," and "History" to name but a few—each representing a different approach to the theories presented and all played by Thurston. Through special effects and editing, Thurston is at one point having a conversion with three other versions of himself which, to Thurston and Rauber's credit, is executed brilliantly.

In addition to its unique format, *Who Killed John O'Neill?* also tackles an aspect of 9-11 conspiracy theory that is typically only mentioned in passing by other films. John O'Neill was at one time the FBI's top counterterrorism expert and, towards the end of his career, was specifically focused on the activities of Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Upon leaving the FBI, O'Neill took a job as the head of security for the World Trade Center and was killed on 9-11. Some theorists—the filmmakers included—see this chain of events as too coincidental, and cite O'Neill's death as one of the key pieces of evidence of the US government's foreknowledge or involvement in 9-11.

Who Killed John O'Neill? takes a long and winding route to arrive at its conclusions about 9-11, digressing for several minutes at a time to discuss CIA front companies, the JFK assassination, drug trafficking, and a host of other conspiracies. The Man has an elaborate chart on his wall of the interlocking threads of the conspiracy, but most viewers will find themselves completely lost unless they take notes. The film is meticulously researched but loses a good deal of its persuasiveness by abandoning the documentary format, and the viewer will likely process the given information differently than they would had it been more straightforward. Since the facts are presented in dialogue rather than through on-screen text or by an unseen narrator, viewers are less likely to believe the film's claims and, ironically, also less likely to research them on their own.

Who Killed John O'Neill? is ambitious both as conspiracy theory and as a filmic endeavor. In regards to the latter it is largely successful due to Thurston's magnetic performance. The only missteps he makes are when his performance veers toward parody, best seen in the character of "History," which is Thurston doing an impression of Kevin Costner do-

ing an impression of Jim Garrison. It is less successful in presenting its conspiracy theory, however. Why this is the case is something of a paradox and is very telling about the nature of Conspiracy Cinema and why this group of films is structured so similarly. All of the information given in the film is true and can be independently verified and yet by breaking with the conventions of Conspiracy Cinema, it is less believable than those films with unprovable claims. Highly recommended nevertheless.

July 7, 2005 London Bombings

THE FACTS

Homemade bombs packed into rucksacks exploded on London Underground trains 204, 216, and 311 at 8:50 AM on July 7, 2005. The three trains were travelling in different directions but each had stopped at King's Cross St. Pancras station shortly before the explosions. Approximately one hour later a similar device exploded on the No. 30 bus, which at the time was travelling through Tavistock Square.

A total of fifty-six people were killed in the bombings and approximately 700 were injured.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

The July 7, 2005, bombings were the work of four suicide bombers: Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, Germaine Lindsay, and Hasib Hussein. The four bombers were killed in the blasts, and authorities determined their identities based on witness reports and closed-circuit camera footage. The men ranged in age from eighteen to thirty, and three of the four had been born in Great Britain. Each of the men were Muslim and had ties to members of al-Qaeda, and Khan and Tanweer reportedly received training in a Pakistani al-Qaeda camp. Khan and Tanweer also made separate videotaped statements explaining their decisions to commit the bombings and condemning the British government.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The 7-7 bombings were the first major "event" since 9-11, so, as to be expected, conspiracy theorists immediately began to apply 9-11 conspiracy theories to 7-7. The overwhelming majority of 7-7 theories label the bombings a False Flag attack used as a justification of Britain's continual involvement in the Middle East, laying the blame on MI-5, MI-6, the CIA, or a combination of groups. With a False Flag attack as the basis, competing theories typically only vary in their descriptions of the execution of the attacks, but never the motivation. The most popular variations include professional bombs being planted on the trains, the four bombers being alive and well in other countries, and intentional inaction by authorities to maximize casualties.

So uniform are the conspiracy theories about 7-7 that it is nearly impossible to find an outlier. The few that have surfaced tend to be more fanciful but, again, are similar to theories voiced about 9-11. Some claim that the date and location of the attacks were chosen as part of an elaborate ritual sacrifice, while the most inventive claim is that 7-7 did not actually take place, but was simply "special effects," complete with actors playing the roles of victims.

REVIEWS

7/7 LUDICROUS DIVERSION (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: None listed

The anonymous filmmakers behind *7/7 Ludicrous Diversion* veer little from the popular conspiracy theories on the event. They do, however, summarize them much more succinctly than others, accomplishing in under a half hour what many films cover over the course of two. It doesn't sacrifice clarity to do this; it simply eliminates many of the unnecessary arguments and digressions found in other Conspiracy Cinema films. The result is a fast-paced and engaging documentary that is likely to be more convincing to viewers.

"They are using our fear for our safety to restrict our liberties," the film states, aptly summarizing its main theory. The film is activist in

tone, reminding the viewer that crackdowns on freedom and privacy affect every citizen, not just criminals and potential terrorists. *Ludicrous Diversion* also advises viewers not to waste energy on demanding new government investigations into 7-7, stating that any new inquiry will waste public resources and arrive at the same conclusion as those that came before it. A pessimistic opinion, to be sure, but one that few viewers would call unfounded. Instead, the film implores viewers to contact media outlets to perform an unbiased analysis of the events. Since it positions this call as the last hope for personal liberty in Britain, it is likely that *Ludicrous Diversion* will have even more impact today than on its release.

77 MIND THE GAP (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Adrian Connock
Production Company: OfficialConfusion.com

77 Mind the Gap begins in New York City, not London. Much of the film's first half remains there, investigating 9-11 conspiracy theories as a prelude to its main conspiracies. The film points to a Downing Street memo as proof that the US and Great Britain were colluding to begin a never-ending "War on Terror," and *Mind the Gap* presents interviews with former soldiers and war protestors as evidence of the horrors of war. The events of 9-11 are then connected to 7-7 and both are deemed False Flag attacks designed to foster support for the campaigns in the Middle East.

Mind the Gap provides no new theories on the events of the day, but is notable for its use of David Shayler as presenter. Former MI-5 agent Shayler first gained notoriety for violating the Official Secrets Act by publicizing information he learned while working at the agency. Britons likely best know Shayler for his activities after the making of *Mind the Gap*, which include proclaiming himself to be the messiah and re-christening himself "Dolores" and living his life as a woman.

7/7 RIPPLE EFFECT (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Muad'Dib (John Hill)
Production Company: None listed

John Hill released *7/7 Ripple Effect* under the pseudonym

Tracing bus routes in 7/7 Ripple Effect.

"Muad'Dib" in 2007. When a 2009 BBC television program uncovered his identity, Hill was arrested and prosecuted for interfering with an investigation because he had sent copies of the film to several officials. The same BBC program debunked most of the film's claims and spotlighted some of the other beliefs of the sci-fi obsessed Hill, most of which would discredit him in the public's eyes. A website entitled *Friends of Muad'Dib* contains a downloadable version of the film, a petition for his release, and describes Hill as a prisoner of the New World Order.

Despite the controversy surrounding the film and its subsequent "debunking," *7/7 Ripple Effect* presents the viewer with many intriguing theories. The film was one of the first to draw attention to the May 16, 2004 episode of *Panorama*, during which presenters discuss a scenario that is nearly identical to the events of 7-7. Muad'Dib also presents evidence of several bomb scares in Great Britain just days prior to the event before moving into a more lengthy investigation of Peter Power, one of the participants of the *Panorama* panel discussion. *Ripple Effect* shows footage proving that Power's security consultancy firm was running a "mock terrorism scenario" on the morning of 7-7 and asks the viewer to "think about that unbelievable set of coincidences."

Power's mock terrorism scenario forms the basis of Hill's ultimate theory that the four suicide bombers believed that they were simply actors in the drill and were unaware of what was really going to take place that day. An intriguing proposition, but one that sees Hill venture more into speculation as this theory involves pre-planted explosives. The film still has some highly engrossing moments, including an inves-

tigation into the death of a Brazilian electrician on the London Underground shortly after 7-7. *Ripple Effect* sees this as the government's efforts to silence those involved in the conspiracy, *a la* the mysterious deaths after the Kennedy assassination.

Ripple Effect does not always provide ample enough proof for its claims, but remains an interesting film even in the wake of the BBC "debunking." So many questions are raised by *Ripple Effect* that it is nearly impossible to refute them all, and being aware of the criticisms won't impair one's enjoyment of the film. *Ripple Effect* ultimately succeeds as a Conspiracy Cinema film because its focus isn't on proving any one theory but rather causing the viewer to question the official version. By focusing on the bizarre coincidences surrounding the event, it easily accomplishes that goal.

7/7: SEEDS OF DECONSTRUCTION (2009 or 2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Tom Secker
Production Company: 7/7 Truth Campaign

7/7: Seeds of Deconstruction begins by establishing the possibility that 7-7 was a False Flag event, and spends most of its first hour (Part 1) giving an in-depth history of government-sponsored coups and covert operations. Of particular use to the film's arguments is a discussion of Operation Gladio, a campaign of NATO-sponsored terrorism in Europe (primarily Italy) used to bolster anti-Communist views in the public. Though the history lesson may be a bit of a digression, Gladio's well-documented history provides an excellent basis for the conspiracy theories presented in the film's second half.

Part 2 is subtitled "7/7/05" and is a comprehensive look at the events of that day. This section is structured to systematically refute the Home Office narrative and pays particular attention to contradictions in that report. *7/7: Seeds of Deconstruction* points out many such contradictions, ranging from the well-known fact that the train the bombers allegedly took was cancelled that morning, to an excellently researched dissection of discrepancies in victims' stories. The central theory at work in the film is that 7-7 was an operation like Gladio, one conducted by the government to justify the Iraq War and an erosion of privacy in Great Britain.

Director Tom Secker has structured his film well and avoids delving into speculation too much. *7/7: Seeds of Deconstruction* is a convincing

Faked damage? 7/7: Seeds of Deconstruction.

piece of Conspiracy Cinema, one that doesn't ram theories down the viewer's throat but invites them to arrive at their own conclusions. It is a very "British" film in that it avoids the excitability often found in its American equivalent, the 9-11 Conspiracy Cinema film. *7/7: Seeds of Deconstruction*'s methodical pace and almost detached tone make it far more convincing than its more emotionally charged counterparts.

The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy

The Facts

On January 20, 1961, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was sworn in as the 35th President of the United States. A World War II veteran and former Congressman and Senator, Democrat Kennedy narrowly defeated the Republican candidate, former Vice President Richard Nixon, to win the office. Kennedy's presidency was immediately beset by flare ups in the Cold War, including rising tensions in Southeast Asia, the botched Bay

of Pigs invasion, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, the latter of which saw the US and the USSR brought to the brink of war. Kennedy's domestic initiatives included civil rights and a renewed American focus on the "Space Race."

On Friday, November 22, 1963 at 12:30 PM, Kennedy was shot and killed as his motorcade travelled through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. Texas Governor John Connally, riding in front of Kennedy, was also severely wounded, but survived. Kennedy's Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson was sworn in as the 36th President of the United States two hours later on board Air Force One, the presidential aircraft.

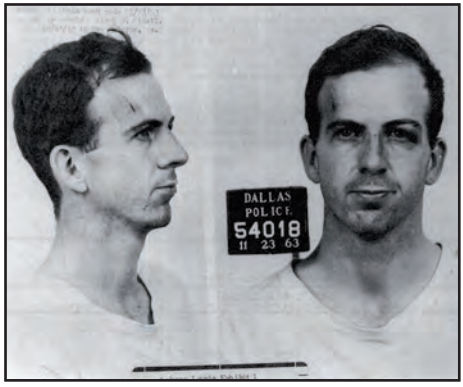
THE OFFICIAL VERSION

It was determined that the fatal shots were fired from the Texas School Book Depository, where the murder weapon, an Italian Carcano rifle, was later found. Depository employee Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested less than an hour after the assassination for the murder of patrolman J D Tippit. Before the end of the day on the 22nd, Oswald had been charged with the murders of Kennedy and Tippit.

Oswald, a former member of the Marine Corps, had become a pro-Soviet communist before the end of his service and defected to the Soviet Union in 1959. He eventually returned to the United States in 1962, where he became active in pro-Castro groups in New Orleans. It would be Oswald's Marxist views that would later be seen as his motivation for assassinating Kennedy.

On Sunday, November 24, 1963, Oswald was shot by Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby as he was being transferred from police headquarters to the county jail. Oswald would die from his injuries two hours later. Ruby's stated reason for murdering Oswald was to spare Kennedy's wife, Jacqueline, from having to appear at Oswald's trial, and to avenge Kennedy's death.

The President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, more commonly known as the Warren Commission, began reviewing the evidence in the case one week after the death of Kennedy. The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald was the lone shooter in Dealey Plaza on November 22, that he had worked independently, and that Jack Ruby had acted alone as well. Investigatory commissions



Lee Harvey Oswald

in 1968 and 1975 supported the Warren Commission's findings.

The 1979 House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) found the presence of a conspiracy likely, but offered no possible suspects and eliminated the governments of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba as well as radical groups and organized crime as possible suspects. A 2003 Gallup poll found that seventy-five percent of Americans believed that there was a conspiracy at work in President Kennedy's assassination; however, there is no consensus as to the parties involved.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The origin point of JFK assassination conspiracy theories is Lee Harvey Oswald himself, who proclaimed his innocence to reporters at the Dallas Police Station and made the now-famous statement, "I'm just a patsy." The word "patsy" specifically means someone who has been tricked or deceived, and most conspiracy theorists believe that Oswald's invocation of the term was not a coincidence. Many theorize that Oswald was involved to some degree in a conspiracy to assassinate Kennedy and was either knowingly or unknowingly working with US intelligence agencies in some form. CIA involvement in the Kennedy assassination forms the backbone of many theories, most notably those of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, whose investigation into the assassination is the subject of the Oliver Stone film *JFK*. The CIA is believed to have the most tangible motive for assassinating Kennedy after he publicly embarrassed them in the Bay of Pigs invasion and reportedly threatened to dismantle them. Others who have

been identified as having something to gain from Kennedy's death and, therefore, possible suspects are Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, George HW Bush, Jimmy Hoffa and labor unions, organized crime, the Jesuits, the Freemasons, and international bankers.

Oswald remains an instrumental part in almost all of the theories listed above. Adding fuel to the conspiratorial fire is the fact that simultaneously so much and so little is known about the man that allegedly changed the course of history with his actions that day. The information about Oswald is often contradictory. Alternately he is both ardently communist and an anti-Castro activist, an expert marksman and a notoriously poor shot, or an abusive husband and a meek, peaceful man. So varied are the reports about Oswald's character that some have hypothesized multiple "Oswalds," a legion of doppelgangers unleashed by persons unknown to further implicate the possibly innocent Oswald in the crime. Credence is given to the multiple Oswald theory by the fact that the known photographs of Oswald rarely resemble each other that much, with even untrained eyes being able to notice marked differences in his nose, chin, and hairline. Having worked briefly as a photography technician, Oswald is said to have dismissed the most damning piece of evidence against him, a backyard photo of him holding the murder weapon and a copy of the *The Worker*, as "trick photography." Both Jim Garrison and Mae Brussell supported theories of the existence of multiple "Oswalds" in the years leading up to the assassination.

The theory most familiar to the public is the "grassy knoll theory," or that there were multiple shooters in Dealey Plaza. A significant portion of eyewitnesses initially claimed that they heard shots coming from the grassy knoll area in front of the presidential limousine rather than from behind, where the Book Depository was located. Some even claim to have seen smoke, as if from a rifle shot, rising from behind the fence on the knoll, a claim possibly verified by photographs from that day. Those not present cite the Zapruder film as evidence that the fatal shots came from in front of Kennedy based on the President's reaction after being struck. The 1979 HSCA stated that an audio recording of the assassination proved that multiple guns were fired, the primary basis for their ruling of the likelihood of a conspiracy.

Again, the identities of the other shooters vary depending on the overarching theory one believes in, but the "three tramps" factor heavily in all. Of the dozens of people arrested in the moments after the assas-

sination, none are more famous than three alleged hobos arrested in the train yard near the grassy knoll. Some twenty-five years after the assassination the Dallas Police released the identities of the men, but speculation had run wild in the ensuing years and this revelation was seen as mere disinformation. Popular theories about the tramps' identities included mafia hitmen, CIA agents, and future Watergate plumbers Frank Sturgis and E Howard Hunt. Both men denied being present in Dallas on that day, but Hunt was unsuccessful in proving that claim, losing a libel case against a magazine that reported he was involved in the assassination. Not all multiple gunmen theories involve the three tramps, and conspiracy theorist Milton William Cooper claimed to have footage where it could be clearly seen that the limousine driver shot Kennedy.

Next to the grassy knoll theory in terms of prevalence is the "magic bullet theory." The magic bullet theory refers to the improbable path needed to be taken by Oswald's bullets to inflict as many injuries as they did, and is typically seen as an example of a government cover-up. Many have claimed that additional bullet fragments removed from Kennedy and Connally prove more shots were fired, and some say that Kennedy's autopsy results were faked to make it look as if the shot came from behind. Also seen as evidence of a cover up are the myriad unexplained deaths of eyewitnesses and material witnesses. *Crossfire* author Jim Marrs identifies over 100 people connected to the assassination that died mysteriously between 1963 and 1976.

Stranger, lesser known theories about the assassination include Jackie Kennedy paying hitmen to murder her philandering husband, Aristotle Onassis murdering him in order to marry Jackie Kennedy, JFK faking his own death for reasons unclear, and Kennedy being killed because he intended to reveal the existence of aliens. In the latter theory, Kennedy was either assassinated by government agents wanting to maintain the secret or by the aliens themselves.

REVIEWS

ASSASSIN UNMASKED (year unknown, c. 1993–1997)

Filmmaker/Director: William Cooper

Production Company: Shining Star Productions

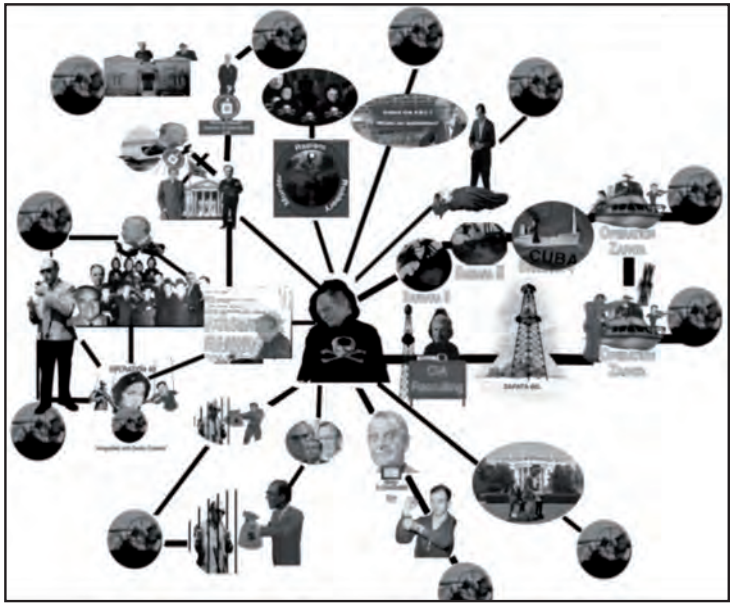
William Cooper from Assassin Unmasked.

William Cooper is the most influential conspiracy theorist of the 1990s and is best known for his book *Behold a Pale Horse* and his long-running radio show *The Hour of the Time*. His contribution to Conspiracy Cinema is limited primarily to filmed versions of his lectures, but there are a handful of documentary style works as well. The most well known of these is *Assassin Unmasked*, sometimes referred to as *JFK Assassin Unmasked*, which presents Cooper's unique theory that the driver of Kennedy's limousine, William Greer, was his assassin.

The film begins with Cooper speaking directly to the camera, where he outlines the motive for the assassination. He cites Kennedy's plans to dismantle the CIA and reveal the existence of extraterrestrials to the American public as being what put Kennedy in the agency's crosshairs. Cooper drops another bombshell during his introduction and claims that Kennedy was not killed by a bullet, but by an explosive capsule filled with shellfish toxin.

The first filmic portion of *Assassin Unmasked* is actually another Conspiracy Cinema film, Lars Hansson's 1988 film *The Truth Betrayed: Dallas Revisited*. For those unfamiliar with conspiracy theory history, Cooper and Hansson had a very heated rivalry in the early nineties as each claimed to have definitive proof that Greer shot Kennedy and accused the other man of being a government-sponsored agent of disinformation. After *The Truth Betrayed*, Cooper produced two more copies of the Zapruder film, the last of which he claims to be the best available print and unique to this film.

None of the pieces of footage included in *Assassin Unmasked* offer enough clarity to be taken as definitive proof of Cooper's claims. This is perhaps a fault of the medium on which the film itself is produced, which appears to have been a home video camera. Cooper did not have the technology to adequately transfer a second or third generation copy of 8mm film to VHS in a manner that would not appear blurry



Dark Legacy*'s web of conspiracy.*

and distorted. This footage is not the real appeal of *Assassin Unmasked*, however, but rather the chance to see Cooper and hear his theory direct from the source. There is a small amount of hero worship in the conspiracy community, and as cults of personality go, there are few as large as Cooper's.

DARK LEGACY (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: John Hankey
Production Company: None listed

Dark Legacy starts by extolling the virtues of John Kennedy and his fight to avoid war, establishing the latter as the main motive for his assassination. The film then begins the lengthy process of proving the existence of a conspiracy, finally culminating in its shocking revelation. *Dark Legacy* effectively builds up suspense and anticipation in the viewer by making vague references to its bombshell claim throughout the film but each time making them wait just a little bit longer. This technique is refreshing rather than frustrating, since Conspiracy Cinema films rarely attempt suspense and typically present theories with

a bluntness that makes them seem implausible.

Dark Legacy's slow build is its main strength. The majority of the information given in the first half won't be new to JFK conspiracy theorists but is presented well. Filmmaker Hankey offers a striking visual presentation and uses lingering, gory shots of Kennedy's corpse to shock the viewer. Shocking the viewer has the dual purpose of both grabbing their attention and forcing them to emotionally invest in the film's narrative. Many Conspiracy Cinema films deal with the JFK assassination from a cold, analytical perspective but *Dark Legacy* wants its viewers to relate to the material on an emotional level as well. While that is certainly an honorable goal, it should not be ignored that appealing to viewers' emotions is still a persuasive technique and one that makes them more likely to unquestioningly accept *Dark Legacy*'s premise.

Dark Legacy eventually reveals its nefarious mastermind to be former President George HW Bush. Again, this won't be surprising to the JFK conspiracist, but will likely raise a few eyebrows among newcomers. The proof the film presents is by no means concrete, but rather a web of personalities and companies that simply proves that it is entirely possible that Bush was working for the CIA at the time, a claim he has denied. *Dark Legacy* makes a strong case that Bush was working for the CIA or, at a minimum, was intimately connected to the group, but the evidence of his responsibility for the assassination is tenuous at best. This theory is related to the viewer through a lengthy animated sequence, the persuasiveness of which is questionable but its entertainment value undeniable. Also working in the film's favor is the glib, sarcastic tone of the narrator which keeps the mood light but may dissuade some from taking the film seriously. *Dark Legacy* concludes on a bizarre note with the narrator performing a folk song about the film's theories.

An alternate version of this film has been circulated with the title *JFK II*, likely so named because it contains many clips from Oliver Stone's film. A supplement to that version is *Deep History* which contains more information about George HW Bush's involvement and concludes with a call to investigate 9-11, naturally attributed to his son George W Bush.

EVIDENCE OF REVISION PART 1: THE ASSASSINATION OF AMERICA (2006)

EVIDENCE OF REVISION PART 2: THE WHY OF IT (2006)

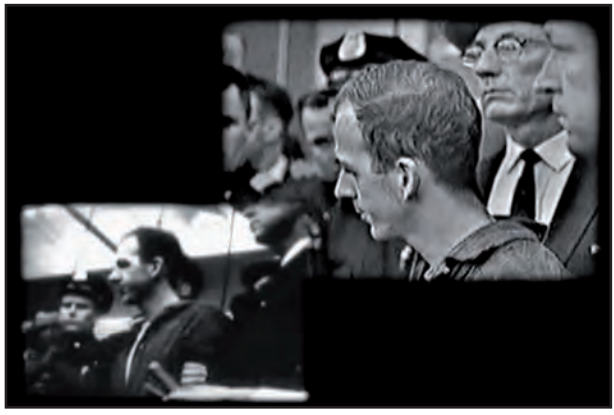
EVIDENCE OF REVISION PART 3: LBJ, HOOVER AND OTHERS: WHAT SO FEW KNOW EVEN TODAY (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Terrence Raymond
Production Company: Etymon Productions

Evidence of Revision is the most powerful film series in Conspiracy Cinema and, taken as a whole, is possibly one of the best documentaries of the whole of cinema. Its creator chooses to remain anonymous—going by the pseudonym "Terrence Raymond"—and the story of how it came to be is as intriguing as the information it contains. An amateur conspiracy researcher, Raymond compiled over 3,000 hours of primary source video material on the JFK, RFK, and Martin Luther King Jr assassinations, some of which had not been seen since their initial broadcast. After spending several years editing the footage into something coherent and manageable, Raymond mailed forty copies of an eight-hour work divided into six parts to conspiracy theory magazines and websites. The film immediately reinvigorated interest in these topics, despite the fact that the conspiracy theory world had come to be dominated by 9-11.

Part 1: the Assassination of America does not attempt to ignore the events that occurred after the Kennedy assassination, but rather to place them in historical context. *Evidence of Revision* is so named because Raymond sees the current state of world affairs as symptomatic of an Orwellian "controlled history"; one that is constantly "revised" to serve the goals of those in power. Every piece of footage here—as it is in all of the chapters—is pulled from a mainstream media broadcast concerning the assassination. This first film contains one of the only examples of on-screen text in the series, used here to explain the need to wrest the control of information from the hands of special interests and return it to the people. *The Assassination of America* does just that, not presenting the audience with theories but rather unabridged history. The first such clip is one that will be new to even the most diligent Kennedy researcher and chilling to all who watch it. While waiting for the President to arrive at a meeting of Ft. Worth businessmen on the morning of the assassination, the broadcaster inexplicably gives a detailed explanation of the assassination of President McKinley by Leon Czolgosz.

The clips in *the Assassination of America* come from a variety of



Coverage from two networks superimposed in Evidence of Revision Part 1.

sources and one, an interview with former Dallas Deputy Sheriff Roger Craig, is used to give the film a framework of sorts. Craig—referred to by some as the "the one who got away" for the numerous alleged attempts on his life—took statements from the eyewitnesses in Dealey Plaza immediately after the assassination. Craig's interview is used to introduce the topics covered in the film, but Raymond largely lets the clips speak for themselves. His main interest is the evolution of the official version over the course of the day and he places a great deal of emphasis on information that was later revised, such as the initial reports that the murder weapon was identified as a German Mauser. Also of note is a large amount of rarely seen footage of Oswald in the Dallas Police station, and *Part 1* concludes with the revelation that Craig was eventually found dead from questionable suicide.

Part 2: the Why of It is less engaging from an emotional or conspiratorial perspective but still contains a breathtaking amount of historic footage. This chapter essentially establishes the motive for the assassination through an analysis of Kennedy's policies and, particularly, how they differed from that of Lyndon Johnson. It is in this chapter that *Evidence of Revision* produces its villain in the form of LBJ, and a fair portion of the running time is dedicated to depicting him as a cutthroat politician involved in bribery and corruption. *The Why of It* never directly links LBJ to the Kennedy assassination but is far more explicit in assigning responsibility to the CIA. The overarching theme of this chapter is never stated outright, but is easily discernible. It is Raymond's opinion that Johnson was not above murder to get what he wanted, and the CIA had such animosity towards Kennedy that they would have gladly

carried out such an operation.

Part 3: LBJ, Hoover and Others: What So Few Know Even Today connects others to the Kennedy assassination, particularly business interests. Johnson again plays a key role for what is shown as his willingness to be bribed, but J Edgar Hoover also plays a pivotal role and it is claimed that he was blackmailed by both organized crime and large corporations to protect their interests. Much of the information in this third chapter digresses far from the Kennedy assassination but maintains the overall theme of suppressed history found throughout the series.

Like all Conspiracy Cinema films, *Evidence of Revision* was made with an agenda. It is not an agenda to prove a particular conspiracy theory, however, but to simply prove history can be—and has been—rewritten. It is a goal more easily proven. Raymond could not supply footage of a CIA agent shooting Kennedy from the grassy knoll, but he can provide dozens of instances where the story of that day was changed, sometimes even minutely, until it became something wholly different than before. In this regard the film comes closer than most Conspiracy Cinema films to the true definition of conspiracy theory as a rebellious, populist form of history, a refusal to blindly believe what one is told. *Evidence of Revision* is the rare film that is persuasive enough to change not only your opinion on a topic, but the very way you process information, and is therefore highly recommended.

Parts 4 through *6* deal with the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr, and are discussed in those respective chapters.

EXECUTIVE ACTION (1973)

Filmmaker/Director: David Miller
Production Company: National General Pictures

Nearly twenty years before Oliver Stone garnered Oscar nominations and box office success with *JFK*, David Miller's *Executive Action* was roundly decried for presenting what is essentially the same story. The film's run lasted no more than a handful of weeks in most markets, and it would remain largely unseen for almost a decade after its release. *Executive Action* transforms the Conspiracy Cinema film into an action-oriented thriller, but is no less harsh in its attacks on the official story.

The film, written by Dalton Trumbo, Donald Freed, and conspiracy theorist Mark Lane, uses an interesting approach by telling the major-

The men who rule the world: Executive Action.

ity of its story from the villains' perspectives. Burt Lancaster and Robert Ryan star as ciphers for the CIA and military-industrial complex, respectively, and the majority of the film is dedicated to the planning of Kennedy's assassination. By having these nefarious figures plan the assassination, *Executive Action* explains most of the Kennedy conspiracy theory as presented by Lane, albeit from the opposite perspective. In doing so, the film makes the theory appear more plausible since it is shown as being the result of conscious decisions made by well-trained assassins and not simply supposition.

Though it uses fictional characters and an unverifiable scenario, *Executive Action* still presents its events as facts. The film incorporates actual documentary footage at several points to intentionally blur the lines between fiction and the truth. The technique is very successful here and the commingling of truth with theory is an important facet of Conspiracy Cinema. *Executive Action* ends with text crawl describing the deaths of eighteen JFK assassination witnesses before 1967, describing the odds against such a coincidence as being "one hundred thousand trillion to one."

Executive Action is still largely unknown by cinephiles and conspiracy theorists alike despite being more readily available after the popularity of Stone's *JFK*. An excellent example of a drive-in potboiler, the fact that this film has a more accomplished cast and more talented screenwriters makes it one of the better such films. Of particular note to New World Order conspiracy theorists: the secondary reason given for the assassination of Kennedy is to start a campaign of global depopulation, with Vietnam as the first in line.

The real assassin? I Shot JFK*'s James Files.*

I SHOT JFK (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Ton Roozeboom & Jeffery Roozeboom
Production Company: Crime Time Productions/jfkmurdersolved.com

This provocatively titled film is based largely on videotaped "confessions" by James Files, a currently incarcerated criminal who claims that he fired the shot from the grassy knoll on November 22, 1963. Files, who would have been twenty-one at the time, states that he was recruited by the CIA while in the US Army and that he and Lee Harvey Oswald were both part of a conspiracy orchestrated by the CIA and organized crime families. Several other figures are interviewed in the course of *I Shot JFK* but the main focus of the film is the interview with Files, during the course of which he gives a wealth of details about the assassination and the mafia.

Several high-profile conspiracy researchers have stated their belief of Files' claims and just as many others have labeled him a fraud. Files, and subsequently *I Shot JFK*, offers no proof for his claims other than his word, something that many viewers will have difficulty accepting. He is, by his own admission, a career criminal, murderer, and spy, and the fact that the interview is being conducted while he is in prison does his story few favors. Files' story is somewhat entertaining to listen to and he does know how to hold a viewer's attention, his charisma being the likely reason that his story is given credence by some.

The filmmakers also offer the unabridged interview with Files as *Files on JFK* and a similarly themed film entitled *The Grassy Knoll: FBI Agents Reexamine the JFK Assassination.*

JFK (1991)

Filmmaker/Director: Oliver Stone
Production Company: Warner Brothers

Mention the term "Conspiracy Cinema" to the average person and they will likely presume that you're talking about Oliver Stone's 1991 Academy Award nominated film *JFK*. While, indeed, *JFK* was perhaps the first and last time that conspiracy theories were so eloquently presented to the public *en masse*, Stone's film relies heavily on ideas that were already well established when Stone was still a teenager. *JFK* therefore does not represent a revolution in conspiracy theory, but rather a summary.

Stone's film centers on Jim Garrison and his theories about the assassination. Garrison—and by proxy, Stone—does not consider his alternate version of events a conspiracy theory, but rather a scenario based wholly on fact. In this regard, *JFK* very much resembles the other films in this book, seeking not merely to ask questions but to provide answers as well. *JFK* entertains many possible scenarios for the assassination but never the official version, dismissing it out of hand as pure fantasy. Just as with Conspiracy Cinema documentary films, *JFK*'s target audience consists of sympathizers rather than sceptics.

It is, however, significantly more persuasive than many other works on the assassination. Stone's abilities are perhaps at their peak in *JFK*, an intensely personal project for him. The director's vision is clear and successfully realized; even the very obvious bias Stone has does not hamper the material. Helping immensely are the performances by Costner, Jones, Pesci, and a criminally underrated performance by Gary Oldman as Oswald. *JFK* is populated with brilliant and often brief performances, and yet all are inevitably overshadowed by the subject matter itself: an eerie parallel to the mass of personalities both willing and unwittingly digested by the Kennedy assassination.

Stone is no stranger to controversy but *JFK* is easily his most incendiary work. A host of articles criticized the film, Stone, and Warner Brothers as purveyors of "propaganda." MPAA president Jack Valenti likened *JFK* to Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* in a statement that is both unduly harsh to Stone and woefully minimizes the tragedy of World War II. Several authors, critics, and historians produced annotated lists of the factual errors in the film. Some of these lists range from legitimate

criticisms of liberties taken by Stone; others take him to task simply for deviating from the Warren Commission's "official version" of history.

Though it appears to have gone largely unspoken, the conspiracy community had many opportunities to take issue with Stone's film as well. *JFK* uses several "composite" characters, combinations of multiple individuals for the sake of the narrative and length of the film. In particular, Kevin Bacon's "Willie O'Keefe" is such a character, and since he provides a good deal of the information Garrison uses against Clay Shaw/Bertrand, O'Keefe is an easy entry point for the film's debunkers. Furthermore, the entire motive for the Kennedy assassination is provided by Donald Sutherland's "X," a composite character and the film's *deus ex machina*. Such liberties are anathema to the Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker and theorist alike for exactly the reasons they are missteps here. Here, the Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker understands something that is perhaps lost on Stone: if any part of your film can be proven false, no one will believe anything you say.

JFK serves as the beginning of a loosely structured triptych of Stone's on political power, continued in his *Nixon* and *W.* Though well made films ,they are anaemic compared to *JFK*. The film has many fictionalized elements and digressions into interpersonal drama, so I would hesitate to call it a masterwork of Conspiracy Cinema. Its influence cannot be underestimated however, as it revitalized the conspiracy community in a way that would not be seen until 9-11 a decade later. One could make the argument that *JFK* did not prove the existence of a conspiracy, but it is undeniable that it did prove that public interest in such a topic was sufficient enough to entertain such an idea and make the film a box office success. Critic Roger Ebert assessed the film correctly in his December 20, 1991, *Chicago Sun-Times* review of *JFK*, stating that the film is less about the event itself than it is about people's attitudes and feelings towards it. On some level, this is true about every Conspiracy Cinema film.

THE JFK ASSASSINATION: THE JIM GARRISON TAPES (1992)

Filmmaker/Director: John Barbour
Production Company: Blue Ridge Entertainment

Of the deluge of JFK Conspiracy Cinema that followed in the wake of Oliver Stone's *JFK*, *The JFK Assassination: the Jim Garrison Tapes* is the

only one to take an in-depth look at that film's focal point: New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. The film contains much of the same information covered in Stone's film, but conspiracy minded viewers will immediately recognize that Garrison's story is being told here, not Kennedy's. *The Jim Garrison Tapes* opens with a specious claim that is likely to rankle most theorists as it states that Garrison was the one person in 1967 to claim that the CIA was behind the assassination. In fact, several bestselling books had reached the same conclusion and countless other theorists had made the claim on radio and other media, some of whom even helped supply Garrison with the information he used to arrive at that theory. There has always been an overlap between Conspiracy Cinema and exploitation cinema, though, and filmmaker Barbour likely gives prominence to Garrison because it was he that the public wanted to know about. After all, most people's hunger for knowledge on the Kennedy assassination had been sated by Stone's film.

Barbour is very aware of conspiracy theory history, however, and tips his hat towards it by including clips from Mark Lane's film *Rush to Judgment*. Lane, along with other well-known conspiracy theorists like Robert Groden, appear in the film, not necessarily to present their theories but to serve as further validation that Garrison was correct in his assumptions. Viewers watching solely for information on the Kennedy assassination will likely lose interest during portions of the film dedicated to Garrison's marital troubles and relationship with his children. Again, this information seems to have been included to form symmetry with Stone's film.

No new information about the Kennedy assassination is given in *the Jim Garrison Tapes* but the film will be intriguing for those who are interested in tracing the evolution of conspiracy theories and the personalities involved. Lane, Groden, Jim Marrs, and the other theorists interviewed in the film come across as intelligent and well-spoken, often more so than they do in their own works. This is likely because Director Barbour was a sympathizer, but not necessarily a conspiracy theorist himself. He therefore must have approached editing the film with an outsider's perspective, making conscious decisions to make the theorists seem as credible as possible. *The Jim Garrison Tapes* is a historically important but ultimately pedestrian entry into the JFK Conspiracy Cinema canon.

JFK—THE CASE FOR CONSPIRACY, PARTS 1 & 2 (1993 & 1995)

Filmmaker/Director: Robert Groden
Production Company: New Frontier Video/Grodenfilms Productions

Robert Groden's two films are a thorough if uneventful analysis of the Kennedy assassination. The majority of the first film is dedicated to an examination of Kennedy's wounds, and autopsy photos are featured heavily. For Groden, there are no fewer than four shooters in Dealey Plaza on that day, with the fatal shot originating on the grassy knoll. *Part 2* is dedicated solely to amateur footage from the day of the assassination, and naturally includes the entire Zapruder film as well as lesser known footage shot by Elsie Dorman and Jack Daniel.

Though made after Oliver Stone's *JFK*, *JFK—the Case for Conspiracy* was not a cash-in. Director Groden was a well-known conspiracy author and had even served as a consultant on Stone's film. He is best known for being responsible for the first public broadcast of the Zapruder film in 1975. Groden has been involved with several high-profile television specials regarding the Kennedy assassination and it is somewhat odd that his own contribution to Conspiracy Cinema is such a non-event. The information in these films won't be new to even casual conspiracy buffs and can be found presented more succinctly elsewhere. Groden released a third film, *The Killing of a President*, which consisted largely of segments pulled from both *Case for Conspiracy* films.

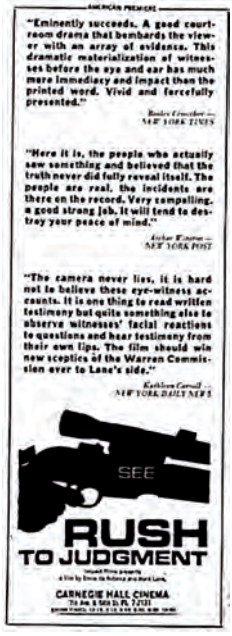
RUSH TO JUDGMENT: THE PLOT TO KILL JFK (1966)

Filmmaker/Director: Emile De Antonio & Mark Lane
Production Company: Judgment Films

Based on Mark Lane's book of the same name, *Rush to Judgment* is one of the earliest Conspiracy Cinema films and is an invaluable resource for conspiracists and historians alike. Lane was certainly not the only conspiracy theorist voicing these ideas at the time, but his decision to take his message to the screen was unprecedented. By 1966, a handful of films had been released about the Kennedy assassination but they were either apolitical historical documents of the event (*Four Days in November*) or gimmicky, overwrought exploitation films (*The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald*). *Rush to Judgment* was the first film to openly criticize the official story, making it an important but sadly over-

looked part of cinematic history.

After some rare footage of Oswald in the Dallas Police station prior to his murder, Lane introduces himself and the film by stating that the work is a "brief for the defense," a reference to the fact that the Warren Commission denied his request to represent Lee Harvey Oswald's interests in their hearings. Thusly, *Rush to Judgment* is structured very much like an attorney's arguments would be, with Lane interviewing witnesses who stated that the Warren Commission changed their testimony and others that were not interviewed at all. Lane's film is the only existing footage of many of these eyewitnesses. Some, including railroad employee Lee Bowers, would die under mysterious circumstances in the years following.


"Eminently succeeds. A good courtroom drama that bombards the viewer with an array of evidence. This dramatic materialization of witnesses before the eye and ear has much more immediacy and impact than the printed word. Vivid and forcefully presented."
NEW YORK TIMES
"Here it is, the people who actually saw something and believed that the truth never did fully reveal itself. The people are real, the incidents are there on the record. Very compelling, a good strong job. It will tend to destroy your peace of mind."
NEW YORK POST
"The camera never lies, it is hard not to believe these eye-witness accounts. It is one thing to read written testimony but quite something else to observe witnesses' facial reactions to questions and hear testimony from their own lips. The film should win new sceptics at the Warren Commission over to Lane's side."
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
SEE
RUSH
TO JUDGMENT
CARNEGIE HALL CINEMA

Ad for Rush to Judgment.

Released such a short time after the assassination, *Rush to Judgment* analyzes several facets of the case that have since faded from both the historical record and conspiracy theories about the event. Among these is an investigation of Oswald's attempted assassination of General Edwin Walker, a key point of the Warren Commission's argument that Oswald had planned to assassinate Kennedy. The photo of Walker's home that was entered into evidence had been altered from the one Marina Oswald remembered seeing, and Lane uses the Commission's own published reports as proof of a cover-up. Lane also interviews several witnesses who are able to prove that Jack Ruby was well-known to the Dallas Police and subsequently would not have been able to gain access to the parking garage without someone's knowledge and approval. This isn't merely conjecture on anyone's part; former Ruby employee Nancy Hamilton describes the almost daily presence of law enforcement officials in his club and the fact that they repeatedly allowed Ruby to violate the law in exchange for money, girls, and other favors.

At some point in his questioning of each witness, Lane queries them about whether or not they believe a conspiracy was at work. Surprisingly, many did not and believe that Oswald acted alone in the assassination. This is a clever gambit on Lane's part. Since his witnesses have no conspiracy theory agenda, their testimony is infinitely more cred-

ible. They are objectively describing what they saw and heard on that day, not grasping at unrelated straws to piece together a web of conspiracy. Lane, however, is convinced enough of a conspiracy to be able to utilize those who disagree with him as proof.

Every second of footage in *Rush to Judgment* is a historical goldmine for the conspiracy theorist. None are as powerful as one of the film's last, though, a talk with amateur conspiracy researcher Penn Jones Jr. Jones' story is not only useful to Lane's argument, but is an invaluable case study into the mind of a conspiracy theorist. Due to his deep respect for Kennedy, Jones began closely following all of the information coming from the Warren Commission and, dissatisfied with what he found, began doing a serious investigation on his own. Penn immediately found himself stymied by the number of witnesses that had vanished without a trace and the many others who had died, making him one of the first theorists to discover that many people connected to the Kennedy assassination had died mysteriously. After the filming of *Rush to Judgment*, Penn would write several books on the assassination and later would be the one who informed Jim Garrison about Clay Shaw's involvement.

Lane and director de Antonio wisely give the last word in the film to Penn: "I think all of us who love our country should be alerted that something is wrong in the land." This short statement not only accurately summarizes the goal of *Rush to Judgment* but also the motivation of the Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker or conspiracy theorist. Sometimes there is more at stake than simply knowing the truth. It's a message that occasionally is drowned out of Conspiracy Cinema by the showmanship of its creators, but it is loud and clear in *Rush to Judgment*.

SPOOKS, HOODS AND THE HIDDEN ELITE (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: J W August & Wim Dankbaar
Production Company: Secret History Productions/jfkmurdersolved.com

Spooks, Hoods and the Hidden Elite is a two hour interview with Chauncey Holt, a portrait artist, CIA associate, and mafia employee. Holt describes his involvement with the intelligence community and organized crime over the course of the interview, and describes the two as having an "incestuous relationship," implying that being on the CIA's payroll and in the mob was commonplace in the early sixties and

he hypothesizes that it still is. Holt claims to have played an indirect role in the Kennedy assassination by supplying guns and other supplies to CIA/mafia hitmen in Dealey Plaza, including Charles Harrelson, father of actor Woody Harrelson. Holt claims to not know exactly who shot JFK, stating that there were multiple teams of shooters, some of which he was not involved in.

Of the many people who have claimed to have taken part in the assassination, Holt's story seems more credible than most. This is likely due to his demeanor; *Spooks, Hoods and the Hidden Elite* does all it can to play up the image of Holt as a "kindly grandfather" figure. It largely works, as Holt does not seem to be the type of person to invent such a story for personal gain, yet the fact remains that there is no other proof of his story than the story itself. No others have come forward claiming to know him, and although Holt claims to be one of the legendary three tramps, several sources dispute this.

Like other "JFK confession" videos, *Spooks, Hoods and the Hidden Elite* is an entertaining film but one that does not immediately foster belief in the viewer. The epilogue of the film explains that Holt died shortly after the interview was filmed: a sad fact, but one that doesn't make his claims any more believable. Even if he was lying, Holt spins a good yarn—one strong enough to engross conspiracy theorists and mafia aficionados alike.

An interesting side note: *Spooks, Hoods and the Hidden Elite* is distributed by the same company that released *I Shot JFK* based on the claims of James Files. Files and Holt make no mention of one another but their stories do not contradict.

THE TRIAL OF LEE HARVEY OSWALD (1964)

Filmmaker/Director: Larry Buchanan
Production Company: Falcon International Pictures

A "WHAT IF" FILM FROM *ZONTAR: THE THING FROM VENUS* AND *FREE, WHITE and 21* director Larry Buchanan. Buchanan's films are cult classics because of their bizarre plots but he plays it very straight in *The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald*, which is inexplicably staid despite its controversial subject matter. Taking place in a Dallas courtroom, several witnesses are heard but not Oswald himself, proving that Buchanan's goal was exploitation, not conspiracy theorizing. In fact, no theories other than the

official version are presented in the film but it is an example of Conspiracy Cinema in its willingness to create an alternate history of the event.

ABC presented a two-part film in 1977 with the same title that sees Oswald again assassinated by Jack Ruby before a verdict is reached.

Larry Buchanan made two more forays into the world of notable sixties' deaths with *Goodnight, Sweet Marilyn* and *Down On Us* (aka *Beyond the Doors*). Both films feature conspiratorial takes on their subject matter, and heavily implicate the CIA in the deaths of Marilyn Monroe, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and Jim Morrison.

ZAPRUDER FILM HOAX (1998)

Filmmaker/Director: Jack White & Jim Marrs
Production Company: Unknown

Photo analyst Jack White has famously proclaimed the photos of the Apollo Moon landing and the infamous "backyard rifle" photo of Oswald to be fakes, and in this one hour film he sets out to prove the Zapruder film has also been manipulated. White states the motive for altering the Zapruder film was to change the timing of the event, making it more easily conform to the official story. His claims depend heavily on the statements of eyewitness Jean Hill, who along with Mary Moorman, is responsible for a Polaroid taken during the assassination, the only visual evidence of the event other than the Zapruder film.

Hill states that she and Moorman stepped off the curb into the street to take the photograph; however, frame 305 of the Zapruder film has them standing on the hillside. Taking this as proof that the Zapruder film had been altered, White then begins a frame-by-frame dissection of the film, giving exact measurements of discrepancies and reconstructing how the unaltered film might have looked. Moorman and Hill aren't the only anomalies White finds on the Zapruder film. He lists no fewer than a dozen, ranging from the placement of objects to the direction of shadows.

The information White presents is well researched and somewhat convincing, yet he fails to discuss one important point: whether such manipulation was possible in 1963. Many of the modifications White describes would have needed to have been painstakingly added to each frame by hand. Though not impossible, the task would have been monumental even for the most gifted Hollywood technician. White

hampers himself by overanalyzing the film. While his case about big changes to the film being made is plausible, once he delves into microscopic details of individual frames, his theory seems less credible; a hoaxer probably would not have bothered with details that are barely noticeable.

The film concludes with Jim Marrs interviewing French conspiracy researcher William Reymond, author of two books on the Kennedy assassination. Reymond agrees with White that the version of the Zapruder film known to the public has been altered, and claims to have been shown the original, unaltered version by French intelligence agents. Per Reymond, the unaltered footage shows more than three shots being fired and even features the limo coming to a stop to ensure Kennedy was killed. This brief addendum to the end of White's film makes *Zapruder Film Hoax* an invaluable resource for conspiracy theorists. Reymond's books are currently not available in English, making this film the best place to learn about his theories.

The Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr

The Facts

The Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr is the most important figure of the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, having organized the Montgomery, Alabama Bus Boycott in 1955 and cofounded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. King's national prominence hit its peak with the delivery of his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of Lincoln Memorial during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. King was celebrated as *TIME* Magazine's "Man of the Year" in 1963, and the following year, he became the then-youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent campaigns for social justice and equality.

Beginning in 1967, King broadened his focus to include opposition to the war in Vietnam and working for economic justice for all races

through his "Poor People's Campaign." This second phase of his push for civil rights ended abruptly on Thursday, April 4, 1968, when King was assassinated while on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. King was struck by a single rifle bullet, and died later that night.

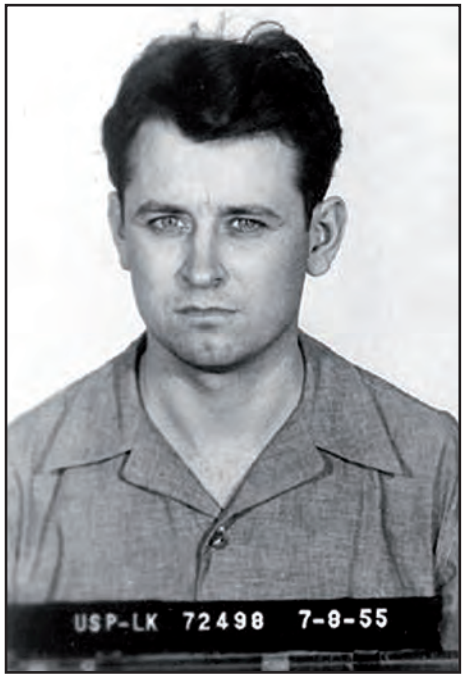
THE OFFICIAL VERSION

Based on evidence found in the boarding house where the fatal shot allegedly originated, the FBI announced their prime suspect was James Earl Ray and launched an international manhunt. Ray was a career criminal who had escaped from prison in 1967. He was identified by another resident of the boarding house, and his fingerprints were on the Remington 760 Gamemaster believed to be the murder weapon which, along with other personal effects of Ray's, were found in a bag left in front of an adjacent building. Ray was apprehended on June 8, 1968, in Heathrow Airport while attempting to flee to Africa. The motive attributed to Ray was racial hatred and his attempt to seek refuge in the white-dominated African states of Rhodesia and South Africa is seen as proof of Ray's racism.

On March 10, 1969, Ray confessed to the murder of Dr King and, upon pleading guilty, received a ninety-nine year sentence without a trial. He would recant this confession shortly thereafter and hinted at a conspiracy, claiming that while he did not shoot Dr King, he "may have been partially responsible without knowing it." Ray was not granted a retrial and remained incarcerated until his death in 1998.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

As with the JFK assassination, the first conspiracy theories surrounding the death of Martin Luther King Jr originate from the mouth of the accused assassin. Ray's version of events centered on a man named "Raoul" he met in Montreal, Canada, who recruited him into a gun smuggling ring. According to Ray, it was Raoul who instructed him to rent that particular room in the boarding house and to purchase the Remington, eventually identified as the murder weapon. Ray remained elusive about the full scope of his involvement with Raoul, a fact that



James Earl Ray

did not do any favors for his claims of innocence.

The official version of Ray's behavior after the shooting has raised many questions as well. Most frequently cited is the wealth of evidence he allegedly left in his wake, including a prison radio with his inmate number etched into it. Many have doubted that a man able to elude authorities for two months would have been clumsy enough to drop a bag containing everything needed to convict him in plain sight. Furthermore, Ray's flight from justice strongly hinted that he was receiving assistance from someone else. Ray flew from Memphis to Toronto, from there to London and Portugal, finally returning to London before being apprehended. It is unknown how the petty crook could have afforded such a trip, and at least one witness stated Ray received an envelope full of cash from a mysterious man while on the run in Toronto.

Canada factors heavily in MLK assassination conspiracy theories. It is the place where Ray claims to have met Raoul and the first place to which he travelled after the assassination. Before and after the assassination, Ray was using the aliases of three men in the Toronto area that each bore striking physical resemblances to him, including one who had undergone cosmetic rhinoplasty as Ray had. Ray himself was un-

able to give a satisfactory answer to the unique coincidence, claiming he had chosen the names at random.

Unlike the JFK assassination conspiracy theories, the overwhelming majority of theories on the King assassination attribute his death to one group only: the American government. Their motive would have been King's increasing focus on social justice for all races and his growing anti-war efforts, which they felt could eventually lead to mass rebellions and class warfare. FBI Director J Edgar Hoover had once called King the most dangerous man in America and believed him to have communist sympathies. It is now known that both the FBI and CIA were actively investigating and conducting surveillance on King, and at least one member of King's inner circle, Marrell McCullough, was an undercover police officer and possible intelligence asset. Despite the two agencies' focus on King, the multiple threats against his life, and the violent outcome of his previous visit to Memphis, almost all of the official protection that would have normally been in place was absent on April 4. Who was present is more curious. According to African-American former Memphis Police Officer Ed Redditt, a surprisingly large number of high-ranking civilian and military law enforcement officials were in Memphis, including the Secret Service, who specifically advised him to stand down from his post guarding King because his own life was in danger.

In 1993, restaurant owner Loyd Jowers confessed to having knowledge of a joint effort between organized crime and US intelligence to assassinate King, and that Ray was simply a patsy. King's family successfully sued Jowers and "other unknown co-conspirators" for wrongful death in civil court. Jowers claimed that Memphis Police Officer Ed Clark had killed King, and King's widow Coretta Scott King cited the victory as proof of "a major, high-level conspiracy." King's family has also publicly stated that they believe that James Earl Ray had no part in the death of Martin Luther King Jr. Despite Jowers' claims and King's family's assertions, a 1999 Justice Department probe concluded that Ray assassinated King and was acting alone.

REVIEWS

THE ASSASSINATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR (1993)

Filmmaker/Director: Dennis Mueller
Production Company: MPI

In 1992 Dennis Mueller made *The Assassination of JFK*, an all too familiar investigation of JFK conspiracies, and he takes a similar approach in *The Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr* the following year. This film is particularly interested in the FBI's monitoring of MLK in the years before his death, a fact it points to as conclusive proof of their involvement with his assassination. In this regard, *The Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr* varies little from other studies of the assassination, but is noteworthy for being one of the few filmic examinations of the topic. It is impossible to say exactly why the King assassination is not a more popular topic for Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers, but it is entirely possible that the popular acceptance of a conspiracy likely renders the necessity of such films moot.

EVIDENCE OF REVISION PART 6: MLK CONSPIRATUS (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Terrence Raymond
Production Company: Etymon Productions

The final instalment of Raymond's *Evidence of Revision* series addresses the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. *MLK Conspiratus* is somewhat of a departure from previous chapters in that it dedicates as much time to examining King's life and work prior to the assassination as it does the event itself. It is an effective technique, as Raymond is able to successfully establish the many groups that could have potentially targeted King, including the United States government. A lot of this footage examines King's later career as an anti-war activist and social justice champion for all races, aspects of his work typically omitted from retrospectives on the man but key to theories about government involvement in his death. This footage, though powerful, highlights what is missing from *MLK Conspiratus*: archival footage from media reports of the assassination. The most important parts of earlier *Evidence of Revision* films were the rare newscasts and the absence of such clips here is noticeable. This footage is replaced by more contem-

Ray recants. Evidence of Revision Part 6.

porary reports on the assassination, many of which may be familiar to the viewer.

The other issue hampering *MLK Conspiratus* is that, by the point the film was made, most people already presumed government involvement in King's death, and many mainstream news features had reached the same conclusion. This mitigates the impact of the piece considerably; the greater number of believers a theory has makes voicing that theory seem less rebellious or conspiratorial. That isn't to say there aren't some shocking moments in the film, however. Chief among these is a claim that I've yet to see made by another Conspiracy Cinema film. An investigator states that among the items found in James Earl Ray's getaway car was an envelope containing several slips of paper. Two of those slips of paper offer conclusive, yet puzzling, proof of the existence of a conspiracy. The first contained the name "Raoul," the elusive figure who Ray claims framed him; the other—Jack Ruby's phone number.

The Death of Princess Diana

The Facts

Lady Diana Spencer was born in 1961, the third child of John Spencer, Viscount Althorp, who would become the eighth Earl Spencer in 1975. Diana married Charles, Prince of Wales on July 29, 1981, in what

remains one of the most widely viewed television events in history. Diana gave birth to two sons, William and Harry, and became internationally known for her charity work with causes such as world hunger and protesting the use of land mines. She and Charles had a very public split in 1992 (later divorcing in 1996) and the popular Diana's romantic life was a recurrent topic in tabloids and gossip shows. Diana was with her current boyfriend, Egyptian millionaire Dodi Fayed, when she was involved in a single-car accident in a Paris tunnel on August 31, 1997. Diana was pronounced dead *en route* to the hospital. Fayed and driver Henri Paul were pronounced dead at the scene of the accident. The only survivor, Fayed's personal bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones, suffered multiple injuries and states he can only partially remember the events of that night.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

The official French investigation of the crash in 1998–1999 confirmed the initial reports from the night of the accident. Diana's Mercedes entered the Alma underpass at a high rate of speed (approximately sixty to seventy miles per hour, more than thirty miles per hour faster than the posted speed for the tunnel) and possibly made contact with a white Fiat Uno. Henri Paul is reported to have been intoxicated and therefore unable to control the vehicle after grazing the Uno, colliding with a support pillar. None of the passengers were wearing seat belts, a fact considered the primary reason for their catastrophic injuries.

A British inquest (Operation Paget) concluded that there was no evidence of any factors contributing to the accident other than Paul's intoxication and recklessness.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Diana's strained relationship with Britain's royal family led to almost immediate speculation that they were in some way involved in her death. The extent of their involvement and the possible motives serve as the basis for the majority of conspiracy theories regarding the event. Several such theories were put forward by Dodi Fayed's father,

billionaire Mohammed Al-Fayed, who gave interviews and inquest testimony blaming the royals (specifically Princes Phillip and Charles) of orchestrating the car crash. Al-Fayed has speculated that their motivation to assassinate Diana was due to their dislike of her relationship with his son, and he has claimed that the pair were scheduled to announce their engagement a few days after the accident and that Diana was even pregnant with Fayed's child. Though both claims are specifically refuted by Operation Paget's report, this theory is the most widespread regarding Diana's death. Those that ascribe to this theory often cite as proof a letter Diana wrote to her confidant Paul Burrell in 1993, in which she specifically accuses Prince Charles of plotting to murder her by sabotaging her car.

The involvement of the royal family and/or the British government appears in the majority of conspiracies about Diana's death. MI-6 is the most often cited culprit, with their involvement ranging from employing Henri Paul or the unknown driver of the white Fiat Uno, controlling the car remotely to engineer the crash, sabotaging the vehicle's safety equipment, or using a powerful light to cause Paul to lose control. Mohammed Al-Fayed has stated that it is his belief that MI-6 carried out the assassination on order of the royal family.

Other theories involve a possible Masonic connection, citing locations and times as evidence, as with Masonic theories about the JFK assassination. Lesser known theories involve Diana and Fayed faking their deaths with the help of survivor Rees-Jones and the possibility that Fayed's business rivals were targeting him and not Diana. International weapons dealers are listed as potential culprits in a theory that cites Diana's campaign against land mines as the cause of her death. Writer/lecturer David Icke believes the motive behind Diana's death to be her plan to reveal that the royal family are, in reality, demonic/extraterrestrial reptilian beings.

REVIEWS

DIANA: BLACK MOON OF DEATH (year unknown, c. 2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Unknown

Production Company: None listed

Diana: Black Moon of Death, also known by the title *Diana Illuminati Sacrifice*, begins with a bit of wordplay that makes the ominous title seem tame. The narrator states that the film is "not a conspiracy, it's a 'truthiracy'"—a look at the facts of the case. He then describes the film as an investigation into satanic witchcraft, the Illuminati, and the dark secrets of England's royals. It bears noting that the narrator sounds as if he'd be more at home as the voice of a late seventies drive-in horror film trailer and he tends to overemphasize words like "death," "murder," and "evil." It isn't distracting, but instead will likely make the viewer hang on his every word.

The main conspiracy theory presented in the film is that Diana survived the crash but was later murdered at the stroke of midnight in an occult ritual. Other theorists have presented similar versions of the story, but *Black Moon of Death* emphasizes that she survived the crash completely unscathed and was abducted from the scene, offering up photos of an undamaged backseat as proof. That's not the only bombshell *Black Moon* drops in its opening ten minutes. The film makes digressions to discuss the evils of *Harry Potter*, the Titanic disaster being an occult ritual, Walt Disney's status as a 33rd degree Freemason, the real forces behind the JFK assassination, and the Illuminati's control of the Vatican. To the film's credit, it manages to relate all of these topics to the death of Princess Diana in some way.

The film is filled with such digressions but it is so quickly paced that the viewer will never lose interest. On the contrary, such a wealth of information is covered in such rapid-fire succession that the viewer will have no choice but to be drawn into the film. About a quarter of the way in, *Black Moon* describes the meaning of its title. The tribute statue to Diana in Paris is an inverted black pentagram, which in magical teachings represents the "Black Moon" or death of the Moon, important because Diana is also the name of the Roman goddess of the Moon.

Diana: Black Moon of Death ultimately becomes more about the astrological/mystical phenomenon of the "Black Moon of Death" than about Diana. A lengthy portion of the film is dedicated to other strange events that occurred under the same Moon, such as the founding of the Federal Reserve, high-profile murder cases, various wars, and financial panics. The viewer will have to simply take the narrator at his word for most of these and the list becomes rather tedious and a bit silly once he starts linking the premiere dates of horror movies and debuts of

Anti-royalism in Illuminati Volume III: Murdered by the Monarchy.

television shows to the phenomenon. There's very little new information about Diana's death in the film, but the digressions are intriguing enough to hold anyone's attention.

ILLUMINATI VOLUME III: MURDERED BY THE MONARCHY (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Chris Everard
Production Company: Enigma TV

Chris Everard uses the third chapter of his *Illuminati* series to list the crimes of all monarchs throughout history, not just those of England's royal families. He still attributes a good deal of history's biggest crimes to them, however, placing the British monarchy as the architects of the Lincoln and Kennedy assassinations within the film's opening sequence. Like his *Spiritworld* series of films, this instalment of *Illuminati* leans more towards the paranormal than conspiratorial and the bulk of the material presented is historical fact rather than conspiracy theory. A sizeable chunk of the film is a "preview" of the material that would appear unabridged in the later *Lady Die* film, and Everard frequently refers to Diana's death throughout the proceedings as an example of the royals' penchant for brutality.

Everard does give us one glimmer of conspiracy near the film's end. He briefly mentions a mysterious "Marquis de Libeaux" who is believed to be the leader of the Illuminati. According to the film, Libeaux attends the meetings of all of the world's top secret societies—the Illumi-

nati, high-level Freemasonry, the Order of the Golden Dawn, *et al*—and has done so for far longer than an average human lifespan. The identity of Libeaux is never explored by the film and is another example of Everard's penchant for showmanship, a key part of Conspiracy Cinema. His films invariably leave the audience wanting to know more and eagerly awaiting the next instalment.

LADY DIE (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Chris Everard
Production Company: Enigma TV

The poor taste of the title belies the very positive portrayal of Diana in *Lady Die*. Early on in the film it becomes evident that director/host/narrator Everard admired Diana, but it is unclear to what degree his dislike of the royal family influenced that opinion. Everard's anti-royal opinions dominate the majority of *Lady Die*'s first half, as more time is devoted to establishing that the royal family would be capable of murdering Diana as is given to theorizing about their involvement. To this end, Everard compares the death of Diana to that of Princess Grace in 1982. Aside from the immediate similarities between the circumstances and locations of their deaths, Everard attributes Grace's death to a royal conspiracy as well. Every conspiracy theory in which the royal family of England is implicated is given some mention in this opening section, such as rumors of their involvement with Freemasonry and the occult, and David Icke appears to champion his theory that Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles are both reptilian aliens, a theory on which he expands in other Everard-produced documentaries and in his own writings.

It is in *Lady Die*'s second half that Everard begins a proper investigation of the circumstances of her death and he offers up several compelling pieces of evidence. Much of what is presented conforms to those theories publicly voiced by Mohammed Al-Fayed, more fully investigated by Everard. So great is his dedication (obsession?) to the topic that he purchases the exact make of car involved in the accident to be able to better understand the driving conditions and safety features. Not all of the theories presented attribute Diana's death to the royal family, however. Everard entertains theories that involve the CIA, MI-5 and/or MI-6 for reasons unspecified, and also discusses the possibility

Filmmaker Chris Everard extols the virtues of a Mercedes in Lady Die.

of international arms dealers murdering her as retribution for her campaign against land mines.

The slick production values of *Lady Die* contribute greatly to its believability. One need only sit through a few amateurish documentaries to fully appreciate how readily proper editing and sound mixing lend credence to a work. Everard presents his theories eloquently and compellingly in the second section. Particularly effective is his recreation of the route taken by the ambulance to the hospital, proving rather dramatically the reported twenty-six minute journey would have had to have been travelled at speeds of under ten miles per hour to have taken that long. The film's first half is more problematic, however. Dealing exclusively in speculation, its placement before the film's arguments for a conspiracy undercut the power of the latter significantly. Viewers will tend to perceive a work as either entirely plausible or entirely implausible, and the inclusion of occult rituals, aliens, and vengeful ghosts in the first section makes it all the more likely that more concrete evidence in the second half will be viewed with scepticism. The zeal with which Everard approaches the topic is admirable but he overreaches, delving into subjects only tangentially related to Diana's death and ones for which he offers no proof.

THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

THE FACTS

AT 9:02 AM ON APRIL 19, 1995, A RENTED TRUCK CONTAINING AN IMPROVISED fertilizer bomb exploded outside the Arthur P Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Over two tons of explosive materials destroyed a considerable portion of the Murrah Building and damaged buildings within a sixteen block radius. Over 150 people were killed in the blast, including fifteen children in the building's daycare center and five people in the surrounding area. Hundreds more were injured or left homeless in what was the deadliest act of terrorism on American soil prior to the attacks on September 11, 2001.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

THE SEARCH FOR THE PARTIES RESPONSIBLE WAS CODENAMED OKBOMB and was the largest criminal investigation in US history; however, the man responsible was actually in police custody less than two hours after the attack. Timothy James McVeigh was arrested for driving without a license plate and carrying a concealed weapon and was sitting in jail even before the FBI released their sketch artist's composite of "John Doe #1." McVeigh had been identified as the person who rented the truck used in the attack and purchased the fertilizer used to produce the explosive, and was eventually identified as the prime suspect on April 22. One day prior to that, Terry Nichols surrendered to police in Kansas when he learned he was wanted for questioning. Nichols served as a material witness for the government before being charged himself as McVeigh's co-conspirator.

McVeigh and Nichols were both heavily involved in guns rights groups, militias, and other anti-government organizations. The stated reason for the attack was retribution against the government for the siege at Waco, Texas in 1993, with the date of the bombing (the second anniversary of the siege's end) being chosen to drive this point home. Neither man was involved in white supremacy organizations, but it is

"John Doe #1"
Timothy McVeigh.

believed that the inspiration for an attack on a federal building came from the white supremacist novel, *The Turner Diaries*, pages of which were in McVeigh's possession at the time of his arrest.

McVeigh and Nichols were convicted in 1997 during separate trials. McVeigh received the death penalty and died by lethal injection in 2001. Nichols was sentenced to life in prison. A third man, Michael Fortier, was convicted of failing to notify authorities of the plot and served twelve years. Fortier is currently in the Witness Protection Program.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

MANY OF THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES THAT SURFACED SHORTLY AFTER THE Oklahoma City Bombing centered on the man known as "John Doe #2." John Doe #2 was a stocky man with a dark complexion, and was described by several witnesses as being with McVeigh on the morning of April 19 and while renting the truck used in the attack. The FBI spent considerable time and energy searching for this second suspect before announcing that Nichols was John Doe #2, despite not resembling the initial sketches. The FBI later revised their statement twice, first saying that John Doe #2 died in the explosion before conceding that McVeigh had acted alone. Speculation regarding the identity of John Doe #2 only increased after the FBI discontinued their search, with the most frequently offered theory being that the other man seen with McVeigh was a federal agent—in essence, McVeigh's handler during a False Flag attack. More recent theories cite the resemblance between John Doe #2 and José Padilla, arrested in 2002 for conspiring with al-Qaeda operatives to blow up buildings using a "dirty bomb." Such theories are based primarily on Padilla's appearance alone, as no one has as yet offered up

a scenario in which Padilla and McVeigh cross paths. A similar theory posits that the second man was Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, who was not yet in custody on April 19, 1995. Theories of Yousef's involvement variously place him as a government agent or as an operative of al-Qaeda working with McVeigh because of their mutual hatred for the US government.

At the heart of many theories about the identity of the possible accomplice—and indeed most theories on the topic—is that the Oklahoma City Bombing was an inside job or False Flag operation, orchestrated by the US government with the intent to place the blame on another group, in this case patriots and militia members. Reasons given for such an act range from the need to create sympathy for the government following Waco, to serve as a distraction from corruption in the Clinton administration, or cover up evidence related to Waco. In such a scenario, McVeigh and Nichols are either unwitting patsies exploited by the government or government agents themselves. Cited as proof of the inside job theory is the fact that officers of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms stationed in the Murrah building, the alleged reason McVeigh selected it as his target, were not present on April 19. Other, connected hypotheses mention the reports of secondary explosions and other bombs in the building as proof that McVeigh was not acting alone. The synchronicities between Oklahoma City and 9-11 have dominated thinking on the topic since 2001 and most inside job theories now place the bombing as a "test run" of 9-11.

Minority theories on the Oklahoma City Bombing include the belief that Timothy McVeigh is still alive after a staged execution. Others alternately place McVeigh in the employ of Japanese or German governments, and one theory positions the bombing as an FBI sting operation gone horribly awry, with McVeigh being able to construct and detonate the bomb before a planned arrest.

REVIEWS

COVER UP IN OKLAHOMA (1997)

Filmmaker/Director: Jerry Longspaugh

Production Company: Citizen Information Network

Director Longspaugh encourages distribution of Cover Up in Oklahoma.

Cover Up in Oklahoma predates the *Evidence of Revision* series in its use of primary source news footage as the main argument for conspiracy. This technique is tedious at times but terrifically effective, as the evolution of the event, from the raw story to the codified official version, is an intriguing journey regardless of which side you believe. *Cover Up in Oklahoma* would have been the first film to include footage from the local Oklahoma City stations rather than simply the national news, and their desire to air any tidbit of information, however small, led to the airing of several eyewitnesses' statements that have since been removed from the historical record.

The biggest issue that *Cover Up in Oklahoma* identifies is the universal coverage of reports of multiple explosive devices in the Murrah Building. Several examples of newscasters making reference to this are shown, and the fact that they even offer details (unexploded but larger than the first) about them makes a compelling case that they weren't simply going off a rumor. Furthermore, terrorism expert Dr Randall Heather remarks on how lucky investigators were to find undetonated devices, which would greatly help identify the culprits.

The second portion of *Cover Up in Oklahoma* is dedicated to the analysis of the event by retired General Benton K Partin. Partin has an extensive background in explosives and through his examinations of photographs has determined that the explosion was a controlled demolition using shaped charges. Neither Partin nor director Longspaugh offer up a motive or a perpetrator and simply point to the existence of a conspiracy. This tactic works in the film's favor; by presenting the film simply as

a search for truth, viewers will be more receptive. *Cover Up in Oklahoma* is intriguing because it is one of the earliest Conspiracy Cinema films on the topic and because of the strength of the evidence it presents.

The film was later revised to include the interview with Jane C Graham that appears in Anthony J Hilder's *Oklahoma Attrocity* [sic].

MURDER IN THE HEARTLAND (1995)

Filmmaker/Director: Perry Tong
Production Company: Center for Historical Analysis

One of the first—if not the first—Conspiracy Cinema film on the Oklahoma City bombing. Working just a few months after the event, *Murder in the Heartland* depicts the earliest conspiracy theories about the bombing, offering modern viewers the rare opportunity to see a theory in its gestational stages. The most striking thing about the film may be how little these theories have changed in the ensuing years.

Murder in the Heartland takes the form of an investigative journalism piece, more akin to a television news program than a documentary film. This is perhaps due to the fact that it almost exclusively utilizes actual investigative journalists as commentators. Pat Shannan is the de facto host of the film, as he introduces the other speakers, conducts interviews, and summarizes the facts of the case for the viewer. Any duties not handled by Shannan are picked up by former FBI agent turned conspiracy theorist Ted Gunderson, and those interviewed are largely uniform in the information they present. Each takes the mainstream media to task for parroting the government's official story and for failing to follow up on key issues such as the mysterious John Doe #2.

Conspiracy theorists will want to take particular note of one interview in the film above all others. *Murder in the Heartland* features an interview with Michael Riconoscuito, best known as being a key player in Danny Casolaro's groundbreaking "Octopus" conspiracy theory. Riconoscuito alleges that a top-secret "super bomb"—possibly one that he created—is responsible for the damage at Oklahoma City. Surprisingly, his theory is ultimately dismissed by Shannan, who summarizes the various scenarios outlined in the film and judges them based on their likelihood. The one deemed most plausible involves multiple pre-planted explosives put forth by former General Benton Partin.

The objectivity with which *Murder in the Heartland* presents its theo-

ries is exceptional. While certainly still working as a Conspiracy Cinema film, it isn't afraid to dismiss outlandish claims in favor of more reasonable ones. The film ultimately comes to the conclusion that it can only assert two theories with any degree of certainty: that one bomb alone could not account for the damage, and that information regarding the event was actively being withheld from the public.

Appended to the end of *Murder in the Heartland* is a filmed radio interview with dismissed Grand Juror Hoppy Heidelberg. We are treated to ads for other Conspiracy Cinema films and books during the commercial breaks, including one book detailing the now-forgotten scandals involving Senator Bob Packwood.

This film has also been released under the title *Oklahoma City Bombing: Forerunner to 9-11*.

OKLAHOMA ATTROCITY: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE (1998) [SIC]

Filmmaker/Director: Anthony J Hilder
Production Company: Free World Film Works

Hilder begins his (intentionally?) misspelled documentary with an introductory segment in which he compares the "one Ryder truck" theory to the "lone gunman" theories of the JFK and RFK assassinations. Hilder is more persuasive than usual in this segment and limits the number of clever linguistic phrases to a mere handful, greatly increasing the viewer's ability to take his anti-New World Order message seriously. This eleven minute prologue is especially significant because of Hilder's eerie prediction of 9-11 some three years prior to its occurrence. He states that the citizens of the US need to accept the conspiracy theories regarding the Oklahoma City Bombing as fact, or the President "is going to be able to pull off another event, perhaps with an attack against Iran or Iraq." He goes on to predict that Muslims would be blamed for future events, but that, in reality, it would be the New World Order. Hilder's only misstep in this section is his belief that these events would occur during Clinton's presidency and subsequently spends an inordinate amount of time on jibing Paula Jones.

The bulk of *Oklahoma Attrocity: Empirical Evidence* consists of an interview with Murrah Building survivor Jane C Graham conducted in 1997. Graham wastes little time getting into the conspiratorial aspects of her story, showing a picture of two men that she saw behaving strangely in

Jane Graham: Oklahoma Attrocity *[sic]*.

the Murrah Building in the days prior to the bombing. Graham states that she observed the two men and a third "supervisor" reviewing building plans in the parking garage while holding what she now believes to be plastic explosives. Once the men noticed she was watching them, they allegedly hid the explosives from view. Graham goes on to state that she saw the same men exiting the building on the morning of April 19 and now believes that they were involved in the bombing.

Graham makes a compelling subject and it is clear that her statements are her own and do not appear to have been coached by Hilder. Furthermore, she makes no mention of the New World Order, or does she claim the two men were government agents, so she certainly appears to have no agenda in making these statements. After relating the harrowing details of how she survived the explosion, Graham's story follows the same timeline as that which unfolded in concurrent news reports, particularly focusing on the multiple reports of additional explosives in the Murrah Building. Before ending her interview, Graham touches on some intriguing details that are, unfortunately, not provided in *Oklahoma Attrocity*, specifically claiming to have seen photographs of the locations of explosives in the Murrah Building. She concludes with the biggest bombshell, claiming to have seen Timothy McVeigh in the building multiple times prior to April 19, each time visiting the offices of the ATF.

From a filmic perspective, Graham's interview becomes tedious by its midpoint as she begins to repeat herself without adding any new information. She is, however, a credible witness to the event and the days prior, so her statements hold far more weight than Hilder's, who

closes the documentary with another monologue. It is during this segment that he shows photos of Ryder trucks at a nearby Army base and concludes government involvement in the bombing. There are far stronger theories out there, and at no point in the film does he offer the "empirical evidence" promised in the title. Graham's interview makes *Oklahoma Attrocity* one of the more intriguing Oklahoma bombing documentaries, but ultimately Hilder's penchant for orating into the camera in lieu of offering evidence of his claims hampers its persuasive abilities significantly.

A more straightforward take on the Oklahoma City bombing from Hilder is *Reichstag '95: an American Holocaust* featuring fellow conspiracists Ted Gunderson and William Cooper.

TERROR FROM WITHIN (2002)

Filmmaker/Director: Jason Van Vleet
Production Company: MGA Films

The majority of *Terror from Within* is dedicated to the official version of the event, describing in detail McVeigh and Nichols' planning and preparations to execute the bombing. It is in the film's final half that the conspiracy appears through a discussion of the identity of John Doe #2. The first suspect the film presents is Bob Jacks/Robert Jacks/Robert Jacques, a man who several eyewitnesses place in the company of McVeigh and Nichols in the time before the bombing. Jacks reportedly resembles the famous drawing of John Doe #2 and most witnesses state that he appeared to be the leader of the trio.

Terror from Within makes a much stronger case for the involvement of Andreas Strassmeir, a German national who would have crossed paths with McVeigh at the white nationalist/survivalist camp Elohim City. The film presents evidence that Strassmeir was working with the FBI in some capacity and entertains the idea that he may have been a double agent of sorts. The theory presented is that Strassmeir was tasked by the government to infiltrate and report on Elohim City but instead decided to conceal information about the bombing to allow it to take place. It is an intriguing theory, but, by its own admission, the film has no real proof to verify it.

Terror from Within represents the best of both worlds since it presents both the official version and a unique conspiracy theory. Most films on

the topic, be they conspiracy or otherwise, begin their stories after the bombing. *Terror from Within* eschews a discussion of the bombing itself for more information about McVeigh's prior activities, making the film one of the more complete analyses of the event available.

The Assassination of Robert Francis Kennedy

The Facts

Robert Francis Kennedy first rose to national prominence while serving as Attorney General under his older brother, John F Kennedy. The younger Kennedy later served as a Senator for New York and began campaigning for the presidency in 1968. His platform included ending the war in Vietnam and expanding civil rights, and after winning the California Democratic primary on June 4, 1968, Kennedy had, for all intents and purposes, secured his party's nomination and possibly the presidency.

Kennedy's victory celebration was held in the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Shortly after midnight, Kennedy exited the ballroom to attend a press conference in another part of the building. As Kennedy and his entourage walked through the hotel kitchen he was shot three times at close range with a .22 caliber pistol. Five others were wounded. Kennedy would die a day later from his injuries.

The Official Version

The assassin, Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, was detained by onlookers and arrested in the hotel kitchen within seconds of shooting Kennedy. A Palestinian immigrant, Sirhan's motive was Kennedy's support for Israel in the Six Day War in 1967, in which Israel gained the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. Sirhan confessed to the crime while in police custody on June 6, 1968. He would

later recant this confession and to this day states that he has no memory of shooting Kennedy.

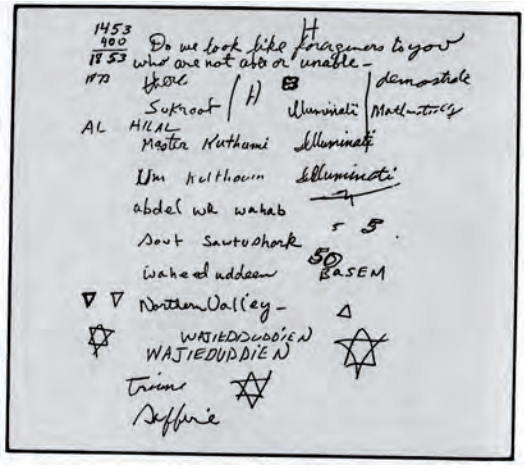
Sirhan B Sirhan was convicted on April 17, 1969, and received the death penalty, later commuted to life imprisonment.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

A CROWDED ROOM FULL OF PEOPLE SAW SIRHAN SIRHAN APPROACH Kennedy with his revolver in hand, shout "Kennedy, you son of a bitch!" and begin pulling the trigger. Of this there is no doubt. The elements of the official story that are contested by conspiracy theorists are numerous, however, and address how the timid Sirhan became a violent political assassin and whether or not others were involved. Other theories call into question the reality of what exactly took place in the Ambassador's kitchen on that night and the possibility that Sirhan was nothing more than a diversion.

The most common theory regarding RFK's assassination centers on Sirhan Sirhan and his motives. Witnesses described Sirhan as being in a "trance-like" state before, during, and well after the assassination. Sirhan even continued to rapidly pull the trigger of his .22 after expending his bullets and even after being tackled to the ground by police and onlookers. Others described the diminutive Sirhan as being surprisingly strong, and it took the combined might of several men—including football star Rosie Grier—to finally disarm him. These strange facts as well as an examination led defense psychiatrist Dr Bernard Diamond to be unable to rule out the possibility that Sirhan committed the crime while under hypnosis, also identifying Sirhan being part of the small percentage of the public that is "extremely susceptible" to hypnosis. Other psychiatrists agreed that hypnosis was a strong possibility and would have accounted for Sirhan's inability to remember the event and the fact that it deviated so wildly from his known patterns of behavior.

In "hypnotized Sirhan" theories, the CIA is almost always linked as the responsible party, with their motive being the potential for Robert Kennedy to expose the truth about the JFK assassination should he become President. More specifically, Sirhan is often called a "Manchurian Candidate," after the book and film of the same name. Such theories involve the CIA brainwashing Sirhan Sirhan into murdering



A page from Sirhan Sirhan's diary. Note the word "Illuminati" written three times.

Kennedy when presented with a "trigger event" and subsequently losing his memory of the event. In this scenario, the "Polka Dot Dress Girl" seen by RFK campaign worker Sandy Serrano and others is believed to be Sirhan's "handler," the person responsible for making sure that he was in the correct place when the trigger event happened. According to Serrano, a blonde in a polka dot dress was seen running from the pantry saying, "We shot him, we shot him!" after the assassination. Several witnesses place Sirhan with the polka dot dress girl earlier in the night, and Sirhan has stated that he does remember having coffee with a young girl earlier in the evening.

The hypnosis theory is given credence by Sirhan's notebook, the piece of evidence used by the prosecution to prove he had planned the assassination in advance. The notebook consisted of page after page filled with stream-of-consciousness ramblings and the oft-repeated phrase, "RFK must die!" To some, the notebook appears to be an example of "automatic writing," a practice typically associated with spiritualism but also connected with hypnosis. The writings have been used by some theorists to label William Joseph Bryan as the programmer, and Bryan at one point claimed that he had programmed Sirhan, but this is often dismissed as an idle boast. If Bryan was Sirhan's programmer, it would explain the numerous times the name "DeSalvo" appears in Sirhan's notebook: "Boston Strangler" Albert DeSalvo was one of Bryan's most famous cases. Hypnosis theories rarely, if ever, give an explanation for why Sirhan Sirhan was chosen as the assassin or how and

when he crossed paths with the CIA.

An alternate version of the hypnosis theory is that Sirhan was used as a distraction, not an assassin. The Los Angeles coroner, Thomas Noguchi, determined that the bullet that killed Kennedy came from behind him, not in front where Sirhan was standing. Forensic evidence from the pantry showed that more than a dozen bullets had been fired and audio analysis of the recordings of the assassination revealed no fewer than ten shots. Despite the coroner's report and the forensic evidence, the LAPD investigation concluded that only Sirhan had fired in the pantry with his eight-shot revolver, offering no explanation for Kennedy's wounds, the additional bullet holes, or the audio recording. The majority of evidence, including crime scene photos and recorded testimony, was later destroyed by the LAPD before it could be independently reviewed.

Rather than the myriad of potential suspects hiding on the grassy knoll, RFK conspiracy theorists know exactly who their second shooter is: a security guard named Thane Eugene Cesar. Cesar was positioned behind Kennedy in the exact spot from which Noguchi identified the fatal shot originating. Cesar admitted drawing his gun in the pantry, and some researchers have linked him to US intelligence circles. Curiously, the LAPD did not have Cesar testify at Sirhan's trial, nor did they test his gun to see if it had been fired that night.

RFK conspiracy theories are typically uniform and involve the CIA to a large degree, although the motives may vary. As with the death of Martin Luther King, Jr, belief in a conspiracy in the RFK assassination is so widespread that relatively few films have been made on the subject.

REVIEWS

EVIDENCE OF REVISION PART 4: THE RFK ASSASSINATION AS NEVER SEEN BEFORE (2006)

EVIDENCE OF REVISION PART 5: THE RFK ASSASSINATION CONTINUED (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Terrence Raymond

Production Company: Etymon Productions

After completing a magnificent trilogy on the JFK assassination, *Evidence of Revision*'s Terrence Raymond turned his attention to the assassination of John's brother Bobby. *The RFK Assassination as Never Seen Before* takes the same approach as Part 1, *The Assassination of America*, in that it exclusively uses primary source footage from mainstream media to make its points. The film opens with some rarely seen color footage from RFK's speech at the Ambassador before beginning a section dedicated to establishing a potential list of suspects in the assassination. Kennedy's pursuit of Jimmy Hoffa and Sam Giancana is explored, as are the potential ties with the CIA that both men had. Perhaps more importantly, Raymond establishes that Lyndon Johnson in particular hated Bobby Kennedy, echoing the theme of the first three chapters of *Evidence of Revision*.

The aspects that made the initial chapters of *Evidence of Revision* so intriguing are present here as well, and much of the film is dedicated to showing how the news media reported the assassination and how that story changed over time. Particularly damning are multiple instances of it being reported that a "security guard shot back" at the assassin, contradicting the official version but confirming the conspiracy theories that have Kennedy being shot from behind by security guard Thane Cesar. Also of note is a recorded police press conference where the officer admits that they "aren't sure if we have the right man." This is especially strange given that Sirhan Sirhan was apprehended in the pantry with the gun still in his hand and the police's statement implies that they had reason to believe that Sirhan had an accomplice. Indeed, at least one early report claimed that two suspects were in police custody. It is spellbinding stuff that has been all but forgotten by history and conspiracy theory alike, and *Evidence of Revision* presents this footage uncut and without commentary to better allow the viewer to digest it.

Evidence of Revision Part 5 picks up immediately where its predecessor left off. The subtitle of the film is *MK ULTRA and the Jonestown Massacre—All Related* and swings farther afield than previous entries into the series. Through an examination of the possibility that Sirhan was mind controlled, the film takes a lengthy—but compelling—digression through the history of MK ULTRA and Jonestown. Neither topic has immediate relevancy to the RFK assassination, but Raymond adequately proves the possibility of CIA involvement in both, which in a roundabout manner proves that it is likely that Sirhan Sirhan was a hypnotized

agent. Unlike the previous entries into the saga, the footage used in *Part 5* is more contemporary and therefore may be more familiar to some viewers. As is the standard for the series, a large portion of the footage will be so rare as to be unseen since its original broadcast.

The digressions make *Evidence of Revision Part 4* and *Part 5* less definitive than the JFK trilogy, but no less engrossing. The combined six chapters of the series remain one of the most powerful collections of footage in the Conspiracy Cinema canon, a plaudit that I'd be willing to extend to the whole of documentary cinema. This pair of documentaries is the only place you'll be able to see a good chunk of this footage, short of combing through film archives on your own, thus it is mandatory viewing for the conspiracy theorist and historian alike.

RFK MUST DIE! (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Shane O'Sullivan
Production Company: E2 Films

RFK Must Die! is a film that I hesitate to call Conspiracy Cinema. It isn't because the film doesn't present an alternate view of history; it certainly does just that. The hesitation is due to it being impossible to classify anything presented in the film as a "conspiracy theory." Director O'Sullivan presents such conclusive proof for the statements he makes in *RFK Must Die!* that it would be dishonest to refer to them as theories. The film's theme is decidedly conspiratorial, however, and *RFK Must Die!* is one of the standout films made about any assassination conspiracy.

O'Sullivan begins the film with a confession: he knew very little about RFK before starting this project. He began to research Kennedy's life, giving the film the opportunity to explain why the RFK assassination deeply touched so many. Here, *RFK Must Die!* exhibits the emotional component inherent in many conspiracy theories. RFK conspiracy theorists are most often people who have a strong connection to the man and his beliefs, and the same is true for John Kennedy and MLK theorists as well. Therefore assassination conspiracy theories are not necessarily based on the individual's desire to reject the official version, but rather a part of the grieving process for that theorist.

RFK Must Die! presents both the official and alternate versions of events, often getting the story directly from an eyewitness' mouth.

O'Sullivan and an eyewitness reenact the RFK assassination in RFK Must Die!

Many who were in the Ambassador's pantry that night are interviewed, and O'Sullivan isn't afraid to challenge one man who changed his original story to fit the official version of events. Through eyewitness statements, not supposition, *RFK Must Die!* successfully proves the strong possibility of a second shooter in the pantry—something which would completely contradict the official account of the assassination.

RFK Must Die! doesn't stray far from the generally accepted conspiracy theories regarding the assassination and, as such, no groundbreaking new information is presented in most of the film. The most common conspiratorial view of the event is essentially confirmed, however, as O'Sullivan has done an excellent job of looking at the assassination from every angle possible. Sections of the film are dedicated to investigating individual aspects of the assassination. The portions on the shooting and the possibility of Sirhan being mind controlled are well-realized but will be familiar to many viewers.

RFK Must Die! is especially eye-opening in its final segment, which not only analyzes the possibility of CIA involvement but goes so far as to pinpoint a possible suspect in the form of David Morales. Morales allegedly confessed to performing the RFK assassination, and O'Sullivan does some incredible original research using rarely seen crowd footage from that night and is able to identify Morales and several other CIA agents at the Ambassador.

A well-crafted and engaging film regardless of how familiar one is with RFK theories, *RFK Must Die!* becomes invaluable with its shocking conclusion. O'Sullivan's efforts to get at the truth go far beyond those of the average Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker, and the result is a film

that well surpasses the quality in other features. Surprisingly, *RFK Must Die!* is O'Sullivan's one and only foray into the world of Conspiracy Cinema. His outsider status in regards to conspiracy theories helps the film considerably because his role is that of an investigator, not a speculator. Highly recommended.

THE SECOND GUN (1973)

Filmmaker/Director: Gerard Alcan & Theodore Charach
Production Company: American Films, Ltd.

The first documentary on the RFK assassination, Theodore Charach's *The Second Gun*, came at a very opportune moment in history. The Watergate scandal was just beginning to come to light and, perhaps for the first time in the twentieth century, Americans had definitive proof that the government engaged in dishonorable and even criminal acts. "Now we know," muses Charach to open the film, referring to the loss of national innocence, or, more to the point, national naiveté associated with Watergate. "We think we know," he continues, "but we only know what we can prove." The second statement cuts to the heart of the matter for Charach: if Watergate can be uncovered, what darker secrets may exist? Was it simply the "tip of the iceberg" as he calls it?

The Second Gun answers that question with a resounding "yes" as it seeks to prove the existence of a conspiracy in a case that, at first glance, seems open and shut. Equal parts Conspiracy Cinema, investigative journalism, and political call-to-action, Charach and Alcan's film is a simultaneous appeal to reason and emotion. Each piece of evidence is presented as not simply proof of a conspiracy to assassinate Robert Kennedy, but as a conspiracy against the people of the United States where a bullet was allowed to "vote for a whole nation," to use Charach's phrasing.

Working so soon after the event, *The Second Gun*—like Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment*—has the benefit of being able to interview many individuals both directly and indirectly associated with the event. One of the lesser known personages that Charach spends a good deal of time on is Scott Enyart. High school student and amateur photographer Enyart was standing near Kennedy during the assassination and took photos as soon as the shooting began. His photos would be the only visual evidence of the assassination, but the LAPD confiscated his

camera and film immediately afterward, eventually returning the photos a year later minus the critical shots.

The majority of *The Second Gun*'s theories rest on the shoulders of security guard Thane Eugene Cesar. Audio interviews with Cesar where he expresses a dislike for the civil rights views of the Kennedys are presented, during which he goes as far as to say that the "white man" may need to "take matters into his own hands" should political repression of minorities prove ineffective. As damning as Cesar's own comments are, much of Charach's case is based on the fact that Cesar's admission of having drawn his gun directly contradicts the official version. Cesar's gun ties into all aspects of the conspiracy and the fact that the LAPD considered it unimportant for investigation is the strongest evidence of a cover-up. As *The Second Gun* rightly points out, since the LAPD ignored Cesar's gun, the pantry could have any number of guns drawn on that evening.

The most surprising aspect for modern audiences will be how little the RFK conspiracy theories have changed in the years since *The Second Gun*. Other theories have been revised many times throughout the years, and the lack of new evidence in the theory makes the existing ones more plausible. Since the theories haven't changed, the appeal of *The Second Gun* is largely in its presentation. For *The Second Gun*, solving the mystery of Kennedy's assassination is important to restoring democracy in the wake of Watergate. One can only assume the importance of finding the truth has grown in the years since.

The Siege at Waco

The Facts

On Sunday, February 28, 1993, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms attempted to execute a search warrant at the Mount Carmel Center in Waco, Texas. Mount Carmel was home to the Branch Davidians, a reclusive sect of orthodox Seventh Day Adventists led by the charismatic David Koresh, born Vernon Howell in 1959. The purpose of the warrant was to investigate claims that the Branch Davidians were

in possession of a stockpile of weapons, including grenades and machine guns, which civilians are prohibited from owning. Koresh and the Davidians were aware of the timing of the raid and reportedly armed themselves in anticipation of the ATF's arrival. Both sides accuse the other of firing the first shot, but regardless a firefight broke out leaving a combined total of ten dead and several more wounded, including Koresh. The botched raid caused a prolonged standoff between the Davidians and FBI, who assumed control of the situation, culminating on April 19, 1993, when the Mount Carmel facility became engulfed in flames, killing seventy-four members of the Davidians, including more than twenty below the age of eighteen.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

The official version of the events paints David Koresh in the same vein as Jim Jones. It is believed that Koresh had no plans for a peaceful resolution to the standoff and ordered the Davidians to burn Mount Carmel as a mass suicide. Koresh is often referred to pejoratively as a "cult leader," but regardless of one's assessment of the Davidians' beliefs, there can be no doubt that their views were admittedly apocalyptic. FBI listening devices prove that the Davidians intentionally placed propane tanks and other accelerants around the inside of the compound prior to April 19.

The Danforth Report, released on November 8, 2000, concluded that the fire at Mount Carmel was started by the Davidians themselves, and that federal agents did not fire on the compound or its inhabitants on April 19. Furthermore, the Danforth Report maintained that the National Guard's involvement with the Waco Siege did not violate the Posse Comitatus Act.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Despite the siege being broadcast internationally in real time, there remains considerable debate about what actually happened on April 19, 1993, and the events leading up to it. One of the earliest issues raised questioned whether or not Koresh would have been capable of

orchestrating a mass suicide, something that the remaining Branch Davidians, including survivors of the siege, strongly deny. Also disputed by Davidians is the portrayal of Koresh as a deranged fanatic who engaged in sex with his flock, as was oft reported by the media during and after the siege. The most common portrayal by the Davidians and by others who met him is that Koresh was a pious and kind man, and there has been no proof offered by any source to validate early claims of the physical and sexual abuse of children at Mount Carmel.

The most common Waco conspiracy theory is that both the ATF and the FBI misled the public about their actions there, firing first on February 28 and starting the fire on April 19, either intentionally or accidentally. The reported motivations for these actions are varied. The predominant one is that the federal involvement at Waco was a horrific comedy of errors, with the ATF agents killed on February 28 being victims of "friendly fire" and with the agencies being unaware of the potential for catastrophic fires that could result from filling the compound with flammable CS gas, or "tear gas." The FBI maintains that it did not fire or use incendiary devices on April 19, but the CS gas was introduced into the compound via grenades that use an incendiary device to release their contents.

A more sinister version of events unfolds in other theories that allege that the siege was a staged demonstration of government power and authority. Such theories attribute the reasoning behind such a display as a promotion of the New World Order agenda, in which the government would use any necessary force to quell rebellions and silence dissent. In this line of thinking, the conspiracy goes not only through the highest levels of government but to the media as well, whose role was to vilify and marginalize the Davidians in the eyes of the public. New World Order conspiracy theories typically involve the confiscation of civilian firearms also, supported by the fact that the official reason for the government's interest in Mount Carmel was to investigate the claims they were hoarding weapons.

A more exotic theory regarding Waco involves President Bill Clinton wanting to "silence" the Davidians, who were witnesses or sometimes accomplices to the drug trade through Mena, Arkansas, during his tenure as governor.

AMERICA: WAKE UP OR WACO (2000)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

The Siege at Waco is an important event to Alex Jones as it epitomizes many facets of his brand of conspiracy thinking. For Jones, Waco is the prime example of an out-of-control government abusing its power and the horrific results. It is also an issue of freedom and the siege violated many of Jones' strict Constitutionalist views. And, as to be expected, Jones ties all of this together as proof of the existence of the New World Order, which he believes used Waco as a warning to potential dissenters.

It is only natural then that *America: Wake Up or Waco* is a very emotional film. It lacks many of the traits that were Jones' trademark at this point in his career—barely hinged rants and attack journalism—and he comes across as someone who, despite his interest from a conspiratorial perspective, genuinely cares about the Branch Davidians. Much of the film is dedicated to interviews with the surviving members of the group and Jones' questions prove that he is as much interested in their lives prior to the siege as he is the events of that day. Long segments of the film show Jones and a group of volunteers building a church on the grounds where Mount Carmel once stood; footage that is often tedious but meaningful.

The film takes very few breaks for conspiracy theorizing, and these moments don't stray far from the theories outlined in *Waco: Rules of Engagement*. This is, therefore, not the film to watch to get new information about the Waco Siege. Rather it is a film for those of you more concerned about the human side of the event, something that is typically ignored by mainstream coverage and Conspiracy Cinema alike.

WACO: THE BIG LIE (1993)

WACO II: THE BIG LIE CONTINUES (1994)

Filmmaker/Director: Linda D Thompson
Production Company: American Justice Federation

The first Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker to tackle the siege at Waco

was former attorney turned anti-Clinton activist Linda Thompson. Many of the arguments Thompson makes in *Waco: the Big Lie* question the ATF's motive for investigating the Branch Davidians. She states that Waco had an unusually high number of gun-related cases in the years prior to 1993, due to an overzealous federal prosecutor and a local ATF "ignorant" of federal laws. *The Big Lie* depicts the siege at Mount Carmel as this ignorance taken to the extreme, done in collusion with a smear campaign in the local media in the days leading up to February 28.

Thompson is one of the first, cinematically or otherwise, to claim that the ATF agents killed on February 28 were victims of "friendly fire"; a claim that would be echoed in all subsequent films on the topic. Supporting her claims of ATF malfeasance are interviews with former members of the organization, all of whom state that the siege at Waco violated every protocol they had been instructed to follow. The remainder of the film is taken up by analysis of footage from April 19, and Thompson concludes that the FBI/ATF fired first into the compound and intentionally started the fire that ultimately destroyed the buildings. *Waco II: the Big Lie Continues* presents many of the same arguments again, this time within the context of refuting the official study on the siege produced by the government.

Both of Thompson's films are rough around the edges but still vital. Many of the theories later presented in the superior *Waco: Rules of Engagement* have their genesis here. Despite her reputation as a Clinton-basher, Thompson keeps her films apolitical, preferring to stick to the facts of the matter at hand. *The Big Lie* and *The Big Lie Continues* are poorly made but excellently researched, and are important to an analysis of early conspiracy theories on Waco.

Note: Thompson's next film, *America Under Siege*, mentions a third film of hers about Waco dealing with the children that died during the siege. No title is given and I did not come across a copy in my research.

WACO: RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (1997)

WACO: A NEW REVELATION (1999)

Filmmaker/Director: William Gazecki & Jason Van Vleet
Production Company: Fifth Estate Productions

Documentary cinema has always been a genre that has attracted

innovators, artists with a clear sense of purpose and vision. For that reason, the "Best Documentary" category of the Academy Awards has long been the most diverse of the awards, with films selected on the basis of artistic and social merit rather than popular opinion or box office receipts. Numerous films that have appeared in the category over the years could be made to fit under the umbrella of Conspiracy Cinema, but the distinction of the first Conspiracy Cinema film to be nominated for an Oscar goes to 1997's *Waco: Rules of Engagement*. One of the first films on the topic, *Rules of Engagement* is a film that explores the full potential of the Conspiracy Cinema genre.

Rules of Engagement opens with what is probably its most powerful sequence. A recorded call between the Branch Davidians and FBI negotiator Jim Cavanaugh is played over a black screen. Discussions between Cavanaugh and Davidian spokesman reach an impasse, a pause occurs, and suddenly the voice on the other end of the phone is that of a small child. "Are you gonna come in and kill me?" the child asks. Cavanaugh assures the child that he isn't, but the same question is repeated as *Rules of Engagement* slowly fades from black to a long-shot of the Mount Carmel compound engulfed in flames. It is a gripping and masterful use of cinema and, perhaps more importantly, accurately summarizes the theme of the entire work.

Rules of Engagement functions as both pre-history of the event and an investigation of the siege, giving information about the Davidians omitted from media coverage and the official version. The Congressional investigation into the event serves as a framework for the documentary, which allows the film to give a point-counterpoint style refutation of the official version. *Rules of Engagement* doesn't ascribe to any particular theory in regards to the "why" of the event, but rather focuses on the callousness of law enforcement during the siege and the concerted efforts at covering it up afterwards. The film ultimately proves that one can make an exceptional Conspiracy Cinema film without engaging in speculation. *Rules of Engagement* attacks the official version of events as diligently as any film in this volume but it does so with hard facts; surpassing most documentary cinema in its ability to appeal to both reason and emotion.

The producer of *Rules of Engagement* made a sequel in 1999, *Waco: a New Revelation*. *A New Revelation* takes a less emotional but still dogged approach at revealing the truth and it brings to light many

April 19. Waco: a New Revelation.

more issues about the siege that were learned after the release of its predecessor. Many of these are minor observations and the bulk of the intriguing information in the film comes from the analysis of the thermal imaging footage from April 19. Thermal imaging proves that government agents fired shots into the compound. Whether or not this was on order or accident is immaterial, since the fact that it occurred contradicts the central tenets of the official version.

Together, *Waco: Rules of Engagement* and *Waco: A New Revelation* are the pinnacle of Waco Conspiracy Cinema and standouts in the genre as a whole.

OTHER EVENTS

THE MOON LANDING AND COSMIC CONSPIRACIES

THE FACTS

The race to the Moon was among the most heated and prolonged "battles" of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. While there were certainly military and technological benefits to being the first nation to conquer space, the conflict was also an ideological struggle between capitalism and communism. Whoever could accomplish the goal would hold a massive psychological advantage over the other and likely gain the upper hand in the international balance of power.

The Soviet Union was the first to successfully launch an artificial satellite, the Sputnik 1, and the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space in 1961. A few months later, President John F Kennedy announced his support for NASA's Apollo program and promised that an American would walk on the Moon before the end of the decade.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

The United States won the "Space Race" when the Apollo 11 landed safely on the surface of the Moon on July 20, 1969. American astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the lunar surface and footage of the historic event was broadcast worldwide. A total of six Apollo missions to the Moon were completed between 1969 and 1972, after which NASA shifted its focus to joint missions with the Soviet Union and the reusable spacecraft, the Space Shuttle.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

THE MOST COMMON CONSPIRACY THEORY REGARDING THE MOON LANDING is that it was a complete fabrication, a bit of movie trickery designed to fool the American public and, more importantly, the Soviet Union. Many versions of this theory even claim that the US government enlisted the services of British director Stanley Kubrick to film the staged Moon landing, pointing to the working relationship he developed with several members of the American space program during the filming of the 1968 film *2001: a Space Odyssey* as proof. Proponents of this theory cite various motives for the hoax, the most frequent being the need to win a symbolic victory over the Soviet Union and to justify the multi-billion dollars of public funds that had been dedicated to achieving the goal. Some of the faked Moon landing theories invoke scientific reasons for the impossibility of travel to the lunar surface while others simply focus on discrediting the official filmed record of the event.

There are theorists that maintain that Apollo 11 did successfully land on the Moon in 1969 and that the conspiracy is in what they reportedly found there. Such theories typically include the astronauts finding proof of the existence of extraterrestrials and some even suggest that Neil Armstrong saw an alien city on the Moon's surface. Rather than offering scientific explanations for this belief, these theories are most often based on unverified quotations from NASA personnel or differing interpretations of photographs and footage from the Moon landings.

Invariably, both sides of the conspiracy spectrum cite the fact that there have been no attempts to land on the Moon since 1972 as definitive "proof" for their respective claims.

REVIEWS

ALTERNATIVE THREE (year unknown, c. 1999–2000)

Filmmaker/Director: Stewart Best

Production Company: TRIGOD Productions

ALTERNATIVE THREE IS A SPRAWLING, NEAR FIVE HOUR EPIC THAT TOUCHES on practically every conspiracy theory imaginable, but ultimately fits best under the category of outer space Conspiracy Cinema films. The

film takes its name from the 1977 British television mockumentary *Alternative 3*. *Alternative 3* was originally intended to be the April Fool's day episode of the program *Science Report*, but scheduling conflicts delayed the broadcast to June 20, causing many viewers to take its fantastical claims as authentic. The plot of the episode revolved around scientists being kidnapped and transported to a secret base on the Moon jointly operated by the US and the USSR.

Alternative Three begins by stating "everything you see on television and movies has already happened," and takes the position that while the *Alternative 3* program may have been a hoax, the scenario it presented was very much real. Per *Alternative Three*, the world's elite have learned that the Earth is undergoing a series of dramatic changes that will eventually make it uninhabitable. They've devised three plans, or "Alternatives," to save themselves, and this film presents all three as being true and currently underway. Each will be familiar to New World Order conspiracy theorists as they are ideas usually incorporated into that theory, but *Alternative Three* combines and categorizes them in much greater detail than other films. Alternative One involves manipulating the weather through HAARP and chemtrails, the latter of which is also used as a form of depopulation. Alternative Two is the creation of underground cities linked by tunnels and high-speed rail, the names of which will be familiar to UFOlogists. Finally the film arrives at Alternative Three, the scenario depicted in the television program to relocate the planet's elite to bases on the Moon and Mars.

Presenter Best provides post-1977 examples of how the scenarios presented in the show are coming true. Of particular note is a chillingly accurate prediction he makes regarding hurricanes in the southern United States that is an exact description of Hurricane Katrina, an event that was four or five years away from occurring at the time of this film. What he doesn't offer is conclusive proof that the Moon bases he describes are technologically possible. The only verification he gives is a return to his original claim that factual elements are incorporated into fictional television and movies, a bit of circular logic that implies that since fake Moon bases exist, real ones do too.

Due to its length, which is extraordinary even by the longer format standards of Conspiracy Cinema, *Alternative Three* features multiple intermissions and was originally released on two VHS tapes. Best doesn't waste time during these intermissions, however, and he uses them to

present the viewer with lessons in Bible prophecy and Christian eschatology. The film's second half is less focused on the *Alternative 3* program and is dedicated to giving examples of how all three "Alternatives" are being enacted. Again, Best swings the net wide, covering HAARP, a coming ice age, AIDS, global warming, and possible UFO whistleblower/hoaxer Bob Lazar.

Alternative Three is exhausting yet simultaneously engrossing. Only the most diehard conspiracy theorist will be able to digest it all in one sitting and casual viewers will likely prefer to revisit it from time to time. It is a bare bones film, however, onscreen text with narration and occasional video clips are all that is offered. What *Alternative Three* lacks in filmic variety, it more than makes up for in the incredible range of conspiracy theories it presents and its ability to convincingly link them.

APOLLO ZERO (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Jarrah White
Production Company: None listed

Apollo Zero seeks to prove that all Moon shots have been faked, not just Apollo 11. Much of the filmmaker's argument relies on the Van Allen radiation belts being impossible to safely cross, and he cites theoretical research from a decade prior to the Moon landing as proof. Not content to rely solely on the radiation belts, *Apollo Zero* presents almost every aspect of space travel as being impossible, specifically taking issue with fueling concerns.

Apollo Zero presents the viewer with many facts but makes some unfounded assumptions from them. The film assumes that since no country has gone back to the Moon that it is impossible. One doesn't necessarily follow the other logically and many of the film's arguments depend heavily on the viewer being ignorant of scientific concepts.

There are, however, a few well-reasoned and well-researched claims made by the film. For years, Moon landing conspiracy debunkers have cited the reflectors placed on the Moon by NASA as proof the landings took place. Their argument states that since scientists use these reflectors in experiments, they must have been placed there; therefore, the Moon landing is real. *Apollo Zero* points to a 1966 issue of *National Geographic* that reveals that scientists were able to get strong reflections from the Moon's surface without the use of man-made reflectors,

evidence that debunks the debunkers.

Such inspired moments are rare, however, and the dismissive tone of the narrator will be off-putting to many viewers. *Apollo Zero* intimates that anyone who believes in the validity of the Moon landing is an idiot, and insulting those you are trying to persuade is not an effective technique. One gets the impression that director White does not have a sufficient enough scientific background to understand the complex physics involved in space travel, which makes his dismissal of the process as impossible seem uninformed. The typical mode of space travel Conspiracy Cinema is to be overly scientific to the point of being boring, but here, the filmmaker's anti-intellectual approach is the film's biggest flaw.

THE BOB LAZAR TAPE (1991)

Filmmaker/Director: Gene Huff & Bob Lazar
Production Company: Tri-Dot Productions

Bob Lazar is one of the most polarizing figures in ufology. So controversial are his claims that it is often overlooked that if Lazar is telling the truth, it would validate dozens of conspiracy theories as well. Lazar claims to have been employed in a top secret government base ("S-4") during the late 1980s where he worked on recovered alien spacecraft. Lazar's background, morals, and knowledge have all been picked apart by UFO sceptics, but, for conspiracy theorists, his story of underground government bases and advanced technologies is worth investigating.

The Bob Lazar Tape begins in a manner that is cinematic, if not a little absurd. Gangly, bespectacled Lazar drives a sports car down a desert highway before jumping out to introduce himself and inform the audience of the basic ideas of his claims. Much of the first half of the film features Lazar explaining the specifics of intergalactic travel in front of a whiteboard, occasionally being assisted by computer graphics. At the film's conclusion, Lazar finally gets to the part most of us have been waiting for, describing how extraterrestrial beings have visited Earth for centuries, guiding the course of human evolution and abducting people to perform experiments on them.

One must sit through a lot of high-level physics to get to the conspiracy theory in *The Bob Lazar Tape*, but it is an invaluable piece of con-

spiracy lore just the same. It was eventually discovered that the colleges where Lazar claimed to have received his degrees had no record of him, but, despite his lack of credibility, many of the ideas he first presented have since been fully incorporated into UFOlogy and conspiracy theory.

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED! MAGIC, ALCHEMY, AND THE ILLUMINATI CONQUEST OF SPACE (year unknown)

Filmmaker/Director: Texe Marrs
Production Company: Power of Prophecy

"Since the beginning of time men have tried to exalt themselves beyond the stars," states Marrs at the beginning of *The Eagle Has Landed!* At first glance, Marrs' focus on outer space seems to be a far departure from his typically terrestrial religious films. It doesn't take long for him to return to those topics, however, and before the ten minute mark Marrs has drawn a correlation between the space program, alchemy, occultism, and the Biblical account of Lucifer's fall. In truth, *The Eagle Has Landed!*'s format is actually closer to that of a sermon than Marrs' other Conspiracy Cinema films and each conspiracy discussed is followed by a passage of scripture.

Marrs' old enemies the Freemasons factor heavily in his theory that the space program has a sinister ulterior motive. Astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin, and Glenn's Masonic membership is discussed and Marrs provides us with footage of NASA's post-Moon landing celebration: Masonic handshakes all around. The discussion soon turns to the existence of extraterrestrials—demons to Marrs—and he cites a report that the legendary Chupacabra, or "Goat-Sucker," of Central and South America is actually a NASA-created hybrid creature. A discussion of the scientific experiments performed in the space flights leads Marrs to use the term "Jewish scientists" multiple times.

Things get significantly more interesting at the conclusion. Breaking from the film's earlier assertions that the Moon landing was real, a text crawl written by William Milton Cooper informs us that all outer space missions were faked. Cooper even gives us the "where" (the Atomic Energy Commission's secret base in Nevada) and the "how" (special effects created by Walt Disney) of the faked space missions, stating that every aspect of NASA's program has been controlled for maximum occult symbolism. This is especially true for the troubled

Apollo 13 mission, an event rich in numerological significance. Apollo 13 suffered an air tank explosion on April 13, 1970 at exactly 1:13—13:13 military time. Per Cooper and Marrs, the entire thing was an elaborate Illuminati ritual.

Marrs' unique perspective on NASA and the space program will be intriguing to most conspiracy theorists, and especially those interested in the Illuminati and Freemasonry. Though it takes the form of a filmed lecture/sermon, Marrs' charisma and screen presence is undeniable and one needn't subscribe to his beliefs to enjoy this film. *The Eagle Has Landed!* also features significantly fewer examples of anti-Semitism than Marrs' other Conspiracy Cinema films; faint praise, but one that makes it far more watchable.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE MOON (2001)

Filmmaker/Director: Bart Sibrel
Production Company: AFTH, LLC

Bart Sibrel's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Moon* is a distillation of his more exhaustive study of the Moon landing, the near-four hour *What Happened on the Moon?* Running for less than an hour, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Moon* is a far more engaging film and one of the better-crafted conspiracy documentaries. Sibrel mounts a persuasive argument but it is one that is enhanced more by the manner of his presentation than the evidence he offers.

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Moon begins with no fewer than four invocations of the Bible through quotations and a brief explanation of Judeo-Christian theology. This religious discussion concludes with the story of the Tower of Babel, which is then juxtaposed against the Titanic as an example of human folly. These pre-title scenes establish the film's main point that travelling to the Moon is scientifically impossible and, furthermore, was then and remains beyond the scope of available technology.

After referring to the Moon landing hoax as "the greatest government conspiracy of all time," *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Moon* delves into its argument by giving a truncated history of the early years of the "Space Race," with particular emphasis on failed attempts at rocketry and the distance between the US and the Soviets in terms

of progress. The motive for a faked Moon landing—an idea the film attributes exclusively to the Nixon administration—is said to have been the need for a distraction from the Vietnam War and American social unrest at the time.

The bulk of Sibrel's argument is based on the assumption that traversing the Van Allen radiation belts would be deadly for humans, a theory that Dr James Van Allen has stated to be false. However, the fact that this point of contention is refutable does not hamper the film, since Sibrel offers multiple concepts that can be taken as proof of a hoax. This hedging of bets is the film's strength. Presenting multiple arguments simultaneously makes it difficult for the viewer to parse through them all during the film's short running time. A viewer knowledgeable enough to know the Van Allen belts are not life-threatening may have a more difficult time dismissing Sibrel's claims of photographic trickery in the released Moon landing photographs, and vice versa. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Moon* is persuasive not because it offers any definitive proof, but because its quick pace prevents its lack of proof from being as noticeable as in other films.

The film is further helped by the soothing, assured voice of its narrator Anne Tonelson and the patina of investigative journalism it maintains. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Moon* positions its Moon landing denial as an act of patriotism by exposing a government scandal on par with Watergate. Linking the Moon hoax to Richard Nixon lends the claims additional credence as the former President is inextricably linked to that known conspiracy. The film ends with slow-motion footage of Kennedy's assassination set to a funeral dirge, revealing clearly that Sibrel is appealing to emotion rather than reason with the film. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Moon* is heavy on innuendo and conjecture but ultimately lacks verifiable information. While it arguably is successful in presenting the motive for a conspiracy and even the possibility that one could have been executed, it fails to prove that one existed.

Filmmaker Bart Sibrel is best known for a 2002 altercation with Buzz Aldrin which culminated in the seventy-two year old punching him in the face after he was asked to swear the Moon landing was real. To date, all of Sibrel's films have been dedicated to refuting the official version of the Moon landing.

SECRET SPACE: THE ILLUMINATI CONQUEST OF SPACE (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Chris Everard

Production Company: Enigma TV/Australian Independent Media

Everard's take on outer space issues begins the same as most with evidence that the US Moon landing in 1969 was faked. As motive, he cites the need to explain the massive amounts of taxpayer money needed to fund the US government's UFO research. This familiar material is laid out well and covered quickly before *Secret Space* breaks with Moon conspiracy tradition by conceding that the US did in fact land on the Moon, and the real conspiracy lies in the reasons for going and what was found once they arrived. Cited is the confirmed Project Paperclip, wherein former Nazi scientists' dossiers were sanitized so that they could be imported to the US to aid in the space program. Everard makes a case for a Nazi obsession with the Moon via an offshoot of the Thule Society (of which several high-ranking Nazis were members) known as the Vril Society. The Vril Society claimed to be able to mediumistically channel extraterrestrial consciousnesses from a distant galaxy, and per Everard, there was a concerted effort by the Nazis to colonize the Moon, a project that continued as Project Horizon when Wernher von Braun arrived at NASA.

The central conspiracy in *Secret Space* is that NASA was successful in their Moon-shot, but needed to fake the Moon landing shown to the public in order to hide the fact that the Earth is engaged in an ongoing war in space. Among the things being covered up by NASA are the existence of alien bases on the Moon, frequent visits by UFOs, and, most incredibly, the existence of "sky serpents"—dragon-like creatures living in Earth's upper atmosphere. A good chunk of *Secret Space*'s second half consists of alleged footage of all of the above, but to his credit, Everard has selected a wider variety of footage than typically appears in Moon Conspiracy Cinema. It is still grainy and/or blurry footage, however, so it falls short of being persuasive to the non-believer.

Persuasion isn't Everard's goal for *Secret Space*; indulgence is. As *Secret Space* heads towards its conclusion, more exotic theories involving the Moon are indulged, including the Freemasonic symbolism associated with it and photos of Neil Armstrong wearing his Masonic apron outside of his spacesuit whilst planting a Masonic flag on the lunar sur-

David Icke weighs in on cosmic conspiracies in Secret Space.

face. To close, the film goes even farther beyond the bounds of conventional Moon landing conspiracy thinking to link the Manhattan Project and the space program as attempts to conduct a mass satanic ritual to create the Antichrist. Surprisingly, this is not an original theory of Everard's but one borrowed from the satanism/occult conspiracy theorists and it is notable that this film melds the two areas.

Secret Space: the Illuminati Conquest of Space is not aimed at sceptics but rather those who already believe in some form of conspiracy regarding the Moon landing. Regardless of their beliefs, viewers may be put off by the film's hedging of bets in its opening, claiming simultaneously that the Moon landing is both real and fake, a confusing duality that the film handles clumsily. This will be particularly egregious to many adamant Moon landing conspiracy theorists, for which the very premise is an impossibility. *Secret Space*, like most of Everard's films, has a more mystical than scientific or historical bent and therefore will appeal most to those with a preexisting belief in extraterrestrials. So much of *Secret Space* is predicated on the existence of aliens that nonbelievers will likely be sceptical of any claims made by Everard, verifiable or not.

SECRET SPACE II: ALIEN INVASION (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Chris Everard
Production Company: Enigma TV/Australian Independent Media

The second instalment of *Secret Space* doesn't begin where the first left off but instead continues from the end of Everard's *Illuminati*

II: the Antichrist Conspiracy. The film picks up at the start of the Iraq War, a conflict the film refers to as "the illegal invasion of Sumeria." A plethora of Conspiracy Cinema films exist on the motivations for the conflict, but, to my knowledge, the theory presented in *Secret Space II* is wholly unique. Everard cites not oil or war profiteering but a search for ancient artifacts dealing with the Annuaki as the United States' purpose in the region. The Annuaki (sometimes spelled Annunaki or Anunnaki) were a group of deities worshipped by the various peoples in and around Mesopotamia, but for *12th Planet* author Zecharia Sitchin they are space-faring extraterrestrials who visited Earth thousands of years ago. For conspiracy theorists, Everard and frequent collaborator David Icke included, the Annuaki are the "reptilians," the malevolent alien race worshipped/served by the Illuminati. Thus, *Secret Space II* accuses Illuminati initiate George W Bush of orchestrating 9-11 to be used as a pretext to invade Iraq to retrieve important items for his cult.

Each of Everard's films follows the same basic pattern. He presents you with a mind-blowing (but unprovable) theory and then immediately drops it, moving on to painfully familiar UFO footage and theories about the existence of aliens. The only information of note in this portion of the film is the brief discussion of Operation Moonblink, a NASA effort to observe lunar events including flashes of light or "blinking" on the lunar surface. Per Everard, there have been over 600 such events observed by NASA, including proof of structures of extraterrestrial origin, which they have concealed from the public.

Secret Space II returns to more conspiracy related topics at its conclusion, showing evidence of the Annuaki/reptilian influence on modern politics and religion. The "Alien Agenda" section again places reptilian aliens as the unseen masters of the Illuminati, and the film goes so far as to posit that many prominent political figures are reptilians themselves, including George W Bush.

Secret Space II is based exclusively on the theories of David Icke: a departure for Everard, whose previous films only used him as a commentator. I will leave a decision about the merits of Icke's theories of a group of shape-shifting aliens controlling the world up to you, but I must say that it is a hard sell. It is an all-or-nothing issue; one either believes in it completely or dismisses it as madness. That being said, viewers of *Secret Space II* will fall into one of those two camps—the former will find this information chilling, the latter will find it hilarious.

One of the first William Cooper videos, UFOs = The Secret Government.

Everard's presentation and pacing are strong enough that you'll be engaged in the film until its conclusion regardless of which side of the issue you fall.

UFOS = THE SECRET GOVERNMENT (year unknown, c. 1989)

Filmmaker/Director: William Cooper
Production Company: None listed

William Cooper is one of the most important figures in conspiracism and UFOlogy, thus this filmed lecture where he talks about both is worthy of analysis. UFOs are the primary subject of Cooper's talk, but in his introduction he promises to expose the secret government of the United States, the group behind the illegal drug trade, and finally why the government is so afraid of the public learning the truth about extraterrestrials. As usual, Cooper offers up a unified field theory, jumping from topic to topic with ease and never failing to make a connection where most people would not find one.

One must bear in mind that Cooper was addressing fellow UFOlogists in this lecture, so he leaps right in and begins discussing recovered UFOs. He states that many such incidents have occurred, including some with living aliens, and chastises the audience for debating about the locations and number of such events, stating that it only matters that it has happened at all. He goes on to claim that a small, basketball-sized object powered the crafts, and this device was a source of unlimited "free" energy. The US government began studying this technology

and attempted to replicate it, leading to the creation of underground bases, one of which houses the "secret government"—the one that deals with the extraterrestrials and is the real authority in the US.

Cooper continues to discuss face-to-face meetings between extraterrestrials and the non-secret US government, and the "Alternative Three" project of bases on the Moon and Mars. As Cooper's claims get more exotic, audience members begin to leave and some choose to heckle him, only to be shouted down by those staying. Cooper ends his speech with the revelation that there are bases on the Moon both alien and human in origin, and advises that these can be easily seen in photos published by NASA.

UFOs = The Secret Government is an invaluable piece of Conspiracy Cinema because it is one of the earliest lectures by Cooper. Much of the material in the piece appears in his seminal *Behold a Pale Horse*, but here Cooper was still an unknown, hence the reactions of some audience members. Cooper commands an audience like few have, and the chance to see him at this early point in his brief career is well appreciated.

WAS IT ONLY A PAPER MOON? (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Jim Collier
Production Company: Grade-A Media

Collier's interrogatively titled *Was It Only a Paper Moon?* begins with another, more blunt question: "Do you assume that man landed on the Moon?" If, like Collier, you do not make this assumption, he considers you to be a "true sceptic" and says that only such a sceptic will be able to appreciate the information that follows. Rare is it that a filmmaker states from the onset that his film is only directed at like-minded individuals but it is a clever technique in that it excuses him from having to do much of the introductory work Conspiracy Cinema typically contains. Collier wastes no time setting the scene; his film assumes not only that the viewer agrees with his theories, but that they are as intimately familiar with all of the Moon landing's aspects as he is.

Technical evidence is the basis of Collier's faked Moon landing theory and he begins in general terms before delving into minutiae later in the film. This early section focuses on photographs and footage of the Moon landing, in particular, how light and shadows fall as evidence of

Hidden camera research in Was It Only a Paper Moon?

their being inauthentic. His arguments are familiar but more specific than those seen in other documentaries and Collier occasionally makes broader claims, like stating that the lunar surface is rough and uneven throughout, making a landing impossible. Frequently he cites the lack of documentation for inventions such as the Lunar Excursion Module as proof that they were merely simulated, but unfortunately Mr Collier does not entertain the idea that there would be a vested interest in keeping the schematics of such inventions secret lest they be obtained by other nations.

The dry, repetitive first half of *Was It Only a Paper Moon?* belies Collier's excitement in its second half. Collier takes a unique approach to prove his theories by travelling to the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, covertly filming the objects he had previously discussed. Identifying himself as a researcher, Collier attempts to confront former NASA flight engineer and astronaut trainer Frank Hughes with his doubts but instead poses most of his questions to a well-versed tour guide. This section infuses some much needed excitement into the proceedings as Collier continually pushes his luck about what he will be able to get away with, even forcing the guide to provide him with a ruler so that he can measure a portion of the lunar lander at one point. The tension about whether or not the brazen Collier will be caught makes it impossible to look away and it isn't often that Moon landing Conspiracy Cinema films go the way of gonzo journalism.

Collier concludes the film by returning to his original tactic of narrat-

ing pictures of NASA schematics, immediately dissipating any energy generated by the previous section. The main argument that he returns to involves the exit hatch of the lunar lander being too small for an astronaut to exit while wearing their space suits. The audience, who is unlikely to be as familiar with the exact specifications of such equipment, is in a poor position to make up their own mind and will therefore base their belief largely on their assessment of Collier himself. His actions are either an example of his bravery or his arrogance: the former if you're one of his "true sceptics," and likely the latter for everyone else. *Was It Only a Paper Moon?* makes an entertaining watch for Collier's hidden camera footage, but ultimately too heavily relies on technical details—and an unquestioning audience—to be persuasive.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE MOON? (2000)

Filmmaker/Director: David Percy
Production Company: CORE International 2000

David Percy's *What Happened on the Moon?* takes nearly four hours to arrive at the same conclusions already put forth in other Conspiracy Cinema films. That isn't a criticism of the film, however, since the slower, more methodical pace of the film helps lend credence to many of its claims. For most Conspiracy Cinema films, it is enough to simply state that something was staged or that a cover-up exists without so much as offering any evidence of that fact. *What Happened on the Moon?* takes the opposite approach, not making any claim it can't support without a mountain of evidence.

Director Percy is a photographer by trade so it should be only natural that much of his analysis is on the photos and film of the Apollo landing. He arrives at the familiar conclusion that all visual records of the event have been faked, and Percy spends several minutes dissecting each frame, often in microscopic detail. I hesitate to say Percy is "abusing" his expert status here, but he is most certainly capitalizing on the fact that the audience will not be as familiar with photographic perspectives, the angles at which shadows should fall, and how light reflects off surfaces. I doubt that Percy is intentionally trying to mislead anyone, yet it must be noted that only a small portion of the audience would be able to make an informed decision on the material presented. Most viewers will simply have to take him at his word.

The photographic analysis portion of the film is the most intriguing part of *What Happened on the Moon?* as the remainder deals with scientific theories on why man could not reach the Moon. These have been expounded upon in many books and Conspiracy Cinema films, so the footage analysis remains the film's high point. If one is overly familiar with faked Moon landing conspiracies, the film will be largely redundant. It will, however, strongly appeal to those searching for a more exhaustive analysis.

MISCELLANEOUS EVENT CONSPIRACIES

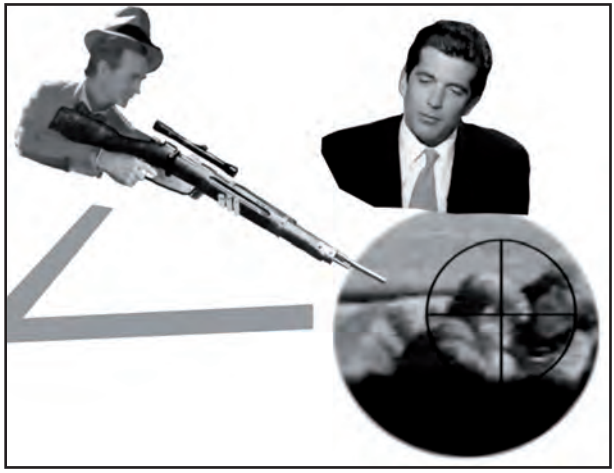
THE ASSASSINATION OF JFK JR. (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: John Hankey
Production Company: None listed

When John Kennedy Jr's Piper Saratoga crashed off the coast of Martha's Vineyard in 1999, most people took the event to be another tragic example of the "Kennedy Curse" at work. JFK Jr had never made a bid for political office, but as a successful magazine publisher and *People* magazine's "Sexiest Man Alive," he was a public figure just the same and arguably as popular as his father and uncle had been. Although Edward Kennedy was still alive at the time, for many people "Camelot" died with JFK Jr.

Though ruled an accident, the crash of JFK Jr's plane doesn't sit well with *Dark Legacy* filmmaker John Hankey, who followed up that film with *The Assassination of JFK Jr.* The most troubling part of the official story for Hankey is the reports that the plane did a near ninety degree dive straight into the ocean at over 200 miles per hour. No mechanical failures or pilot errors could account for this, per Hankey, leaving the only possible solution that the rapid plunge was intentional. Hankey dismisses the idea that JFK Jr committed suicide, and instead believes that someone other than the three known passengers was in the plane that day. *The Assassination of JFK Jr* provides substantial evidence ignored by the media that shows that JFK Jr would have had a flight instructor in the plane with him, and it is this unknown person who is responsible for the intentional crash.

Hankey posits that this mysterious flight instructor was a "Manchurian Candidate" programmed by the CIA and Israel's Mossad to assassinate JFK Jr. This theory explains the otherwise inexplicable fifteen hour delay in starting the search for the plane: the parties needed to remove



The motive. The Assassination of JFK Jr.

the body of the hypnotized agent first. Even Hankey admits that this is pure speculation on his part, but he does provide ample evidence of gross negligence by the Coast Guard and the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) that implies a total procedural failure or a cover-up. Of particular interest is the inclusion of the initial news reports of the crash, in one of which a Coast Guard spokesperson reveals several details that would be patently denied later.

As with *Dark Legacy*, the Bush family is behind it all. This time out, George W Bush orchestrated the murder of John Kennedy Jr, echoing Hankey's theory that the elder Bush was behind the JFK assassination. George W Bush's motive for the killing, per *The Assassination of JFK Jr*, is to appease the "Big Oil Mafia" by murdering one of their enemies, thus securing their support in the 2000 presidential elections. In short, the murder of JFK Jr was George W Bush's payment for a seat at the Illuminati table.

The Assassination of JFK Jr is less well known than *Dark Legacy* but it is a far stronger film. This is both a result of the uniqueness of the material and the vigor with which Hankey pursues the truth. *The Assassination of JFK Jr* presents an impressive amount of original research and, to my knowledge, this is the only film about JFK Jr. The black humor of Hankey's animations is more amusing this time out as well, and, despite the speculation in blaming Bush, much of the information presented is very convincing evidence of a cover-up.

PAUL MCCARTNEY REALLY IS DEAD (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Joel Gilbert
Production Company: Highway 61 Entertainment

Highway 61 Entertainment has a very bizarre business model. Their output falls into two categories: sixties rock nostalgia and conspiracy theories. Their 2010 film *Paul McCartney Really is Dead* is something of a landmark for them since it combines both of their areas of expertise into a single documentary that is both engrossing and thoroughly entertaining. It is not, however, very convincing, quite possibly by design. *Paul McCartney Really is Dead* highlights one of the essential problems of analyzing Conspiracy Cinema: it is often impossible to discern between authentic conspiracy theory and parody. One would guess that filmmaker Joel Gilbert has his tongue firmly planted in cheek and yet the ideas presented in the film are less fantastic than those seen in others.

Paul McCartney Really is Dead is a catalog of the numerous theories and alleged clues that Beatle Paul McCartney died in 1966. Gilbert claims to have received a cassette tape on July 1, 2005, labeled "The Last Testament of George Harrison," purported to have been made while the Beatle was recovering from his 1999 assault. The tape is used as narration in the film and will fail to convince anyone who has ever heard Harrison—or anyone from Great Britain—speak, as it is a poor imitation of British dialect, much less the distinctive Liverpudlian scouse. The obvious falsity of Gilbert's lone source of proof does not make the film completely unbelievable, however. Despite the fact that the "Harrison confession" is a ruse, the "Paul is dead" conspiracy theories are very much real and have been circulating for decades. Gilbert's use of artistic license simply facilitates the delivery of these theories.

According to the theories, Paul McCartney was killed in an auto accident in November 1966. Britain's MI-5, fearing that the news would cause a rash of suicides worldwide, forced the remaining Beatles to keep quiet about the death and to carry on as if nothing happened. They had sufficient material to continue releasing albums and were ordered to begin making appearances with McCartney look-alike William Campbell, dubbed "Fake Paul" or "Faul" by the other Beatles. Per the "George Harrison" narrating the film, John Lennon originally devised the idea to incorporate clues about Paul's death in the Beatles' songs

False Paul or "Faul." Paul McCartney Really is Dead.

and album covers. This took place much to the chagrin of "Maxwell," the group's MI-5 handler, and *Paul McCartney Really is Dead* goes so far as to claim that Lennon's murder in 1980 was orchestrated by MI-5 because he threatened to reveal the truth: a bold, but plausible, claim. The only time the film delves into outright silliness is in its claim that "Rita," the teenage witness to McCartney's crash, demanded that Faul marry her. *Paul McCartney Really is Dead* states that "Rita" was actually McCartney's ex-wife Heather Mills, ignoring the fact that Mills was born in 1968, two years after the alleged crash.

Many segments in the film are dedicated to historical footage of the Beatles and in-depth song and photo analysis, making it a real treat for fans of the Fab Four. *Paul McCartney Really is Dead* is only hampered by its inability to include the Beatles' songs, making it one of the few Conspiracy Cinema films to respect copyright law. The "Paul is dead" theory has long been one of the more amusing conspiracies, but there are those out there for whom the topic is gravely serious. My instinct is to believe that filmmaker Gilbert does not intend for the audience to believe his film is authentic, but rather to simply enjoy the presentation. They undoubtedly will, and since the film never mocks the theories it presents, the hardcore "Paul is dead" theorists won't be offended by the film's glib tone.

A QUESTION OF GUILT—THE MASSACRE AT PORT ARTHUR (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Andrew MacGregor
Production Company: Sunrise AV Productions

A Question of Guilt*'s domestic conspiracist.*

Port Arthur, a peaceful seaside tourist site in Tasmania, was forever changed in 1996 when Martin Bryant killed thirty-five people in the course of an afternoon, one of the deadliest spree killings in history. The whole of Australia was changed as well, with gun laws significantly tightened in the wake of the massacre. Bryant confessed to the murders, and the lack of a trial caused several conspiracy theories to arise. Many of these dealt simply with how Bryant was handled by the courts and the media, but former Tasmanian police officer Andrew MacGregor offers some more theories in his film *A Question of Guilt*.

MacGregor's first problem with the official version involves Bryant's character. Though he had amassed a rather large gun collection, no one who knew Bryant had ever known him to be violent. Furthermore, Bryant, who had an IQ of sixty-six, was known to locals as "Simple Marty," and had been deemed mentally challenged enough to qualify for state disability benefits. MacGregor finds it unlikely that the gentle and unintelligent Bryant could have orchestrated and executed a plan of this scale. Eyewitness statements refer to a determined gunman with frightening accuracy, as evidenced by the fact that more people were killed than wounded during the massacre. MacGregor points out that the official version of events has Bryant behaving out of character and doing activities that he likely would have been incapable of performing.

Circumstantial evidence about Bryant's character and his intelligence is intriguing but not concrete. MacGregor's arguments regarding Bryant's conversations with a police negotiator are far stronger, however. Bryant identified himself as "Jamie" to negotiators, who were

then unaware of his identity. "Jamie" stated that he was with "Rick," an American who he had kidnapped earlier in the day. There is no evidence that "Rick" ever existed, and it is curious that Bryant wouldn't have identified himself to police, since a desire for notoriety is cited as being his sole motivation for the massacre. MacGregor's most explosive claim comes from a portion of the negotiation call where "Jamie" informs the Tasmanian Police not to shoot their "main man," a statement that MacGregor takes to mean that law enforcement was involved in the events of the day.

A Question of Guilt's central theory is that Bryant was simply a patsy for a government-designed massacre to bring about stricter gun laws in Australia. While MacGregor does raise several troubling questions about the events of that day, his ability to prove a motive is greatly limited, and hangs primarily on off-hand remarks by Australian politicians, one of whom stated that there would not be gun laws "until there is a massacre in Tasmania." Some viewers may object to the somewhat detached presentation that MacGregor gives in the film. Filmed entirely in his home, at one point, MacGregor dries dishes while talking to the viewers about discrepancies between the firearms used in the massacre and those owned by Bryant.

This is one of the only films dedicated to an Australian conspiracy, thus *A Question of Guilt* is highly recommended.

SILENCED: TWA 800 & THE SUBVERSION OF JUSTICE (2001)

Filmmaker/Director: James Sanders & Jack Cashill
Production Company: None listed

TWA Flight 800 exploded over the Atlantic Ocean on July 17, 1996, shortly after taking off from JFK Airport in New York, resulting in the deaths of all 230 onboard. The tragedy of the event was compounded by the mystery of what happened to TWA 800. The exact details of the cause of the explosion were somewhere in the wreckage submerged beneath the water, making the investigation exceedingly difficult. There were, however, multiple theories about what happened. Many who witnessed the event claim to have seen a streak of light in the sky connect with the plane just before the explosion. Others state that a large boat was directly underneath TWA 800 and, upon explosion, it sped away never to be seen again.

Silenced *presents evidence of a missile strike.*

The official version of events put forth by the NTSB and FBI is that TWA 800 was downed as a result of a fuel leak being ignited by a short circuit. This explanation didn't sit well with James Sanders and Jack Cashill, and their film *Silenced: TWA 800 & the Subversion of Justice* takes a second look at the event and the evidence of a cover-up. *Silenced* spends a good amount of time showing interviews with the aforementioned eyewitnesses, almost all of whom were never interviewed by the FBI and those that were state that they were treated dismissively. The film goes on to point out that co-director James Sanders was working on the story as a journalist and was arrested for getting too close to the truth… and tampering with evidence, but the film sidesteps this sticky issue.

The missile theory is the only one presented by *Silenced* and it will likely resonate with most viewers because of the wealth of mainstream media coverage the theory originally received. The film presents evidence that traces of bomb residue were found in the cabin area, but it attributes this to a missile, not an onboard bomb. What *Silenced* does not offer is a motive or a culprit. They cannot give a reason why this particular plane was shot down, if one even exists, nor do they present evidence about any persons or groups having anything to gain from the attack. The lack of closure on the theory will hamper its believability somewhat since leaving it open-ended only raises more questions.

Sanders and Cashill have each written on the topic, believing the missile strike to be the result of accidental "friendly fire" from the US Navy. Other theorists have posited that the strike on TWA 800 was an act of terrorism, concealed by the government so as not to alarm the

public. Harvard professor Elaine Scarry, PhD, believes TWA 800 was downed by electromagnetic interference, the same kind conspiracy theorists typically attribute to HAARP, although she makes no mention of the installation.

TUPAC ASSASSINATION: CONSPIRACY OR REVENGE? (2007)

TUPAC ASSASSINATION II: THE RECKONING (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: R J Bond
Production Company: Bond Age Films

Rapper Tupac Shakur is one of the most popular recording artists of all time, having sold millions of albums both before and after his 1996 death. Shakur was the victim of a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas during the fall of 1996, and a number of conspiracies have arisen in the wake of his death, as have numerous "Tupac sightings" in the same vein as those attributed to Elvis Presley. Numerous books and television specials have been made about Shakur's life and death, but filmmaker R J Bond is the first—and to date, only—filmmaker to offer up a Conspiracy Cinema take on the event.

Most of Bond's theories come from Shakur's bodyguards, who implicate Reggie White, head of security for Death Row Records, as the orchestrator of the rapper's murder. Per the film, Shakur had planned to leave the label, a prospect that would have cost Death Row head, Marion "Suge" Knight millions of dollars in potential revenue. This theory posits that Knight realized Shakur was more valuable to him dead than alive, something that has subsequently been proven by the multiplatinum sales of Death Row's posthumous releases of his work.

According to the bodyguards, they were instructed to not carry their weapons on the night of Shakur's murder. The main individual voicing this claim is bodyguard Michael Moore, who also claims to have heard someone say "Got him" on his Death Row issued walkie-talkie immediately after the shooting. Another conspiratorial aspect of Shakur's death is the apparent inaction on the part of the Las Vegas police. An all points bulletin was never issued for the white Cadillac that some witnesses claim to have been involved in the shooting, nor were roadblocks established on highways leading out of the city, allowing the shooter ample time to escape.

Both *Tupac Assassination* films have been met with controversy. Some participants' statements contradict things they have said in other media, and, admittedly, the film does a far better job of establishing motive than it does proving that Wright and Knight were involved in Shakur's death. Most of the controversy has not been about the theories presented in the film, but about the filmmaker's integrity. Michael Moore readily admits in the film that he did not like Shakur very much and both he and R J Bond were accused of a crass attempt to profit from Shakur's legacy after the release of the first film. This is the same motive they attribute to Wright and Knight, yet the fact that he returned two years later with a sequel proves that such irony was lost on Bond.

II

GRAND THEORIES

Those Conspiracy Cinema films that opt not to focus solely on a single event are more ambitious in scope. They set out to not only solve a single conspiracy, but *all* of the world's conspiracies at once. These films offer up unified field theories and link disparate theories to the work of a single group or groups.

This ultimate "villain" is referred to interchangeably as the Illuminati or the New World Order. These two terms can often have varying meanings, depending on the film, so for the sake of clarity this chapter has divided these films by the group with which the film deals the most.

The Illuminati

The Facts

Bavarian law professor Johann Adam Weishaupt founded a secret society in 1776 known as the "Order of Perfectibilists." Weishaupt touted the group as a refined version of Freemasonry and his philosophy came to be known as "Illuminism," leading the Perfectibilists to be known commonly as the "Order of the Illuminati" or simply the Illuminati. The members of Illuminati joined—some accounts say infiltrated—Masonic lodges in the following years before both groups were outlawed by decree of Karl Theodor, Duke of Bavaria, in 1785. When disbanded, the Illuminati had over 2,000 members spread across Europe.

The Official Version

Weishaupt fled Bavaria and went into exile after the suppression of secret societies. He continued to publish books expounding the virtues of Illuminism for several years, but the Bavarian government's campaigns against the group made resurgence impossible. The influence of the Illuminati philosophy continued, however, and many believe that Weishaupt's secularism and opposition to monarchal rule were influential on some of America's Founding Fathers, Jefferson and Washington in particular.

Weishaupt's group was neither the first nor the last to use the name "the Illuminati," therefore it is commonly referred as the Bavarian Illuminati for the sake of clarity. The history of the Bavarian Illuminati ends with Weishaupt's exile.

The Conspiracy Theories

The term "Illuminati" has a host of meanings in the world of conspiracy theory. For some they are a politically-minded secret society

with designs on world domination; for others, they are mystical sorcerers employing the dark magic of ancient civilizations. Invariably, the Illuminati are seen as a bad thing and, in fact, *the* bad thing: the grand architects of every conspiracy conceivable. The Illuminati is often used as a placeholder, invoked when the real identities of those behind a conspiracy are unknown. The same is true for the New World Order, and quite often, the two terms are interchangeable.

Many theories state, perhaps justifiably so, that it is unlikely that Weishaupt's followers in other parts of Europe would have abandoned his cause simply because they were forbidden from practicing it in one part of Germany. Theories based on this line of thinking are usually more political in nature and define the Illuminati as a group of wealthy and politically influential people with common goals. Fritz Springmeier's 2002 book *Bloodlines of the Illuminati* identifies Illuminati membership as a largely hereditary system, with its current ranks made up of the same families it had been centuries ago.

Others believe the Illuminati originated several centuries before the formation of Weishaupt's group. Some Illuminati timelines begin in the 1100s, while others start at the beginnings of civilization in ancient Mesopotamia. There are some that trace the Illuminati back as far as pre-history to the mythical Atlantis and, as to be expected, pre-Weishaupt Illuminati theories deal more with supernatural or religious motives behind the conspiracies. It is this version of the Illuminati that appears most frequently in the works of Christian conspiracy theorists, which see the group as satanic and blame it for not only things like the Kennedy assassination and 9-11, but rock music and pornography as well. It should be noted that the personages who make up the Illuminati in both the political and mystical versions of the group are often the same. Most conspiracy theorists use a blend of both in their theories, tailoring the nature of the group to fit the given scenario.

The Illuminati are a rare example of a conspiracy theory being fully integrated into pop culture. The group appears as villains in television shows, movies, cartoons, videogames, and several novels, each of which puts their own spin on the Illuminati conspiracy theory. The Illuminati are ubiquitous in Conspiracy Cinema and there is significant overlap between films on the group and those on the New World Order. For that reason, this chapter will focus primarily on films where the Illuminati are blamed for events outside the political sphere.

THE BIGGEST CONSPIRACY (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Craig Woyak
Production Company: lastcallforfreedom

Craig Woyak's *The Biggest Conspiracy* owes a large debt to Eric Holmberg's ten-plus hour epic *Hell's Bells: the Dangers of Rock'n'Roll*. *Hell's Bells* is the definitive Christian take on popular music that reaches the somewhat surprising conclusion that soft rock artists like Kenny Loggins are as much in league with Satan as Black Sabbath, Slayer, *et al*. *The Biggest Conspiracy* takes a similar but updated approach to music criticism, pointing out satanic content in the works of Lady Gaga, Eminem, and Jay Z. Woyak diverges from *Hell's Bells* in that he believes this isn't just a case of poor morals, but a conscious and concerted effort to popularize satanism and immorality as part of the Illuminati agenda.

The Biggest Conspiracy presents music as one of the main vehicles for spreading the New World Order/Illuminati message to the world and Woyak intermittently discusses conspiracy theories between song clips. The film occasionally brings up film and television, but music is by far its main focus. It is an interesting take on the Illuminati theory. Many films touch on these topics briefly, but Woyak's fleshed out argument is more cohesive than those attempts. Most people will find his "proof" somewhat lacking, however, and write off many things *The Biggest Conspiracy* lists as evils as simply misinterpreted lyrics. Despite this, he does successfully prove the existence of similar macabre motifs in the works of diverse artists. It is an intriguing concept whether you view this as a conspiracy or simply as a reflection of modern society's preoccupations.

Justin Ludwig's *Musickalmindcontrol* is a much longer film that examines a larger selection of artists but, ultimately, reaches the same conclusions as *The Biggest Conspiracy*.

CONSPIRITUS: THE ILLUMINATI CONSPIRACY (year unknown, c. 2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Xendrius
Production Company: None listed

A still from Musickalmindcontrol.

Xendrius' *Conspiritus: the Illuminati Conspiracy* is a compilation of various Conspiracy Cinema films and information found on the internet. While any number of films take an identical approach, this one distinguishes itself through its attempt to frighten the viewer. *Conspiritus* is the Conspiracy Cinema equivalent of a horror film; every clip and bit of on screen text is chosen for its ability to instill a sense of fear in the viewer. Much of the footage used is fairly tame on its own, so Xendrius must be given credit for trying to drive home the anti-Illuminati message through the use of scare tactics. It is an effective technique.

Most of *Conspiritus* is fairly pedestrian political conspiracies, but the film is also notable for the significant amount of UFO material it presents. *Conspiritus* doesn't believe in the existence of extraterrestrial visitors, however, but in shape-shifting demons worshipped by the Illuminati that sometimes appear as flying saucers and aliens. One extremely effective audio clip used by the film is of an especially frazzled caller on Art Bell's *Coast to Coast* radio program. The "Area 51 caller" as he is dubbed espouses the same demons/aliens theory the film presents, and the shaky, out-of-breath voice on the phone is at least convinced enough to be scared to death himself. The call disconnects at a point that would give even sceptical listeners pause, immediately launching the "Area 51 caller" into conspiracy lore.

Many similar audio and video clips are used in the film, and some viewers may take issue with *Conspiritus*' blatant attempt to scare them. While, admittedly, it is somewhat disingenuous, it is an approach rarely seen taken to this extreme by Conspiracy Cinema films. The argument could be made that all such films use fear in some manner, yet they typi-

cally aren't as overt as this film. The information the film presents will be familiar, but it recontextualizes it enough to not be overly redundant.

A slightly longer version of the film is available under the title *Conspiritus Remake*.

DARK SECRETS INSIDE BOHEMIAN GROVE (2000)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Alex Jones is a prolific Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker, runs one of the most widely read alternative news sites on the internet, and is the popular face of conspiracy theory, the "go-to" guy when a mainstream media outlet wants to present a different take on an issue. One of his achievements stands out over all the rest, however. *Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove* is Jones' magnum opus and one of the biggest achievements in the history of conspiracism. Were Jones to have done nothing else in his career, *Dark Secrets* alone would have secured his fame in conspiracy circles for decades to come.

What makes *Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove* so special? In short, the film provides proof of something that had previously only been a rumor, a conspiracy theory. The Bohemian Grove Club in the woods of northern California had long been rumored a playground of the elites. A place where the important men of the world—the Bohemian Club is male only—would gather to discuss important things. It is believed that the Manhattan Project was initially conceived there and Presidents Taft, Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan, and Bush were all members. Darker rumors persisted that Bohemian Grove was home to more than an "old boy's network," and some locals and obscure books talked about Druidic rites and human sacrifice.

Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove chronicles Alex Jones' infiltration of the Grove with the help of a crew from England's Channel 4. The first half of the film is strictly prelude; the parties travel to California, preparations are made, and locals are queried about what they might find inside. During this portion, a member of the Channel 4 team interviews Jones and manages to reign him in well enough to allow Jones to elucidate his views in a manner he wouldn't be able to do in his own films until years later.

Once Jones and his cameraman Mike Hansen finally gain entrance

"The Cremation of Care": Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove.

to the compound, *Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove* is as taut as any thriller, generating a level of suspense absent from most documentary cinema and almost all Conspiracy Cinema films. The activities they engage in and the conversations they have with club members are mundane, at best, but are still fraught with tension due to the threat of being caught. Jones' usually confidently booming voice is barely above a whisper in the footage, a touch that is possibly simply for show but it still enhances the mood greatly.

The centerpiece of the film is the footage of the "Cremation of Care" ceremony performed in front of a large owl statue. It is this footage that has found its way into countless other Conspiracy Cinema films and, to a large degree, confirmed all the suspicions in the minds of conspiracy theorists. The "Cremation of Care" is a mock human sacrifice performed during the Grove's "Summer Fire Festival," and Jones states that the rituals performed are based in ancient mystery religions and that the owl statue represents the Babylonian deity Moloch.

One can choose to believe Jones' take on things or not, but it is hard to deny that the "Cremation of Care" is a bizarre pastime for politicians and CEOs to undertake. Even if you write Bohemian Grove off as an overblown fraternity party, the importance of a meeting attended by the most powerful, wealthy, and influential men in America shouldn't be underestimated. *Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove* is a milestone of Conspiracy Cinema and conspiracy theory in general, and for many conspiracy theorists it was the definitive proof that the Illuminati was

a real group.

Channel 4's *Secret Rulers of the World* documents this investigation from the perspective of author and television host Jon Ronson.

ESOTERIC AGENDA (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Ben Stewart
Production Company: talismanicidols.org

Esoteric Agenda begins with filmmaker Ben Stewart lamenting our modern concept of time as an external force and advocating a return to the Mayan conception of "natural time" and admitting a belief in their prophecies regarding a coming apocalypse in 2012. Stewart then claims that paganism is the dominant form of world religion as a segway into his analysis of the Illuminati. *Esoteric Agenda* begins at the beginning, stating that Lord Anslem Rothschild chose Adam Weishaupt to form the "Coven of Golden Dawn," the Rothschild's private satanic coven. This group later morphed into the Illuminati, a group that Stewart claims uses "dupes" to carry out their nefarious goals while the true holders of the illuminated knowledge hide behind the scenes.

After tracing Illuminati activities throughout history via investigations of the Nazis and the Catholic Church, Stewart begins to examine modern politics and religions. Here, *Esoteric Agenda* makes some very strong arguments against both institutions, stating that the terms "patriotism" and "faith" have the same meaning: blind submission. Stewart is not against either practice in theory, however he states that unquestioning belief in both is a tool of the Illuminati. He believes those that think conspiracy theories are foolish have fallen into the Illuminati's trap and have been conditioned not to question authority. The film also warns against "false revolutionaries" designed to mislead the public for the Illuminati's gain. During this segment, Stewart shows a still image of Michael Moore, but never mentions him by name.

Esoteric Agenda then takes the opportunity to explore other Illuminati programs, eventually taking on almost every conspiracy theory, from JFK to 9-11 to fluoride in the water supply. The most engaging part of *Esoteric Agenda* is how angry Stewart's narration sounds. His voice is one of a deep seated hatred and righteous anger. Strangely, this anger isn't off-putting, but rather will draw the viewer deeper into the film to attempt to understand its origins. This curiosity will be great

Was Jack Parsons the Antichrist? Illuminati Volume II *thinks so.*

enough to keep you rapt for the full two hours, but ultimately Stewart's anger won't be imparted to most viewers. The film offers up plenty of information for conspiracy theorists, but non-believers will find the lack of proof and digressions about Mayan beliefs to be unconvincing.

THE ILLUMINATI VOLUME I: "ALL CONSPIRACY, NO THEORY" (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Chris Everard
Production Company: Enigma TV

Everard's first foray into the Illuminati conspiracy won't raise any eyebrows among those already versed in the theory. This instalment of the *Illuminati* series focuses primarily on the Illuminati's infiltration of Freemasonry and then the latter group's infiltration of world governments. Much of the film's first section relies heavily on the works of Everard's fellow Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers Jordan Maxwell and Anthony J Hilder, both of whom are interviewed. Each man presents their version of Illuminati conspiracy theory and continues the film's established pattern of summarizing the most well-known points of the conspiracy.

The Illuminati Volume I is one of the least exciting of Everard's films from both a filmic standpoint and on the basis of the evidence presented. Every political figure of the period is linked to the Illuminati, Freemasonry, and a host of other secret societies, but proof of their membership is never offered. The motivation for the film seems not to be to educate or persuade, but rather to summarize the theories for those that already believe. Since elucidation, not distillation, is the primary goal of most Conspiracy Cinema, *Illuminati Volume I* will disappoint theorists and sceptics alike.

THE ILLUMINATI VOLUME II: THE ANTICHRIST CONSPIRACY (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Chris Everard
Production Company: Enigma TV

The second chapter of the *Illuminati* series departs from the investigation of secret societies found in the first chapter and moves rapidly through a broader range of topics. Brainwashing and mind control are first on the agenda and Everard points out examples of the Illuminati's use of sigil magick and repetition to control the populace. The CIA is singled out frequently as a key Illuminati asset and is credited with developing several mind control techniques in the 1960s that are still in use today. The film then switches gears to a look at Judeo-Christian mysteries such as the Kabbalah, the Knights Templar, and the Holy Grail. The first half of the film concludes with the revelation that the Illuminati are in possession of the Holy Grail, which is neither a cup nor a bloodline, a theory popularized by the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* and later fictionalized in *The Da Vinci Code*. Everard states the true Holy Grail is a series of mystical teachings—essentially a spell book—that gives instructions for the alchemical transmutation of matter.

The Holy Grail theory presented in *The Illuminati Volume II* leads directly into the narrative that dominates the film's second half: a fantastical and intriguing theory that is among the most bizarre in the Conspiracy Cinema canon. The film's second half is a quasi-biography of Jack Parsons, occultist and "Father of American Rocketry." Parsons proclaimed himself to be the Antichrist and, per the film, placed a female fetus inside an atomic bomb to create the "Scarlet Woman" of the Biblical Revelations. Everard states the child survived the atomic blast and promises that the story of what happened to the girl will be continued in his *Secret Space II: Alien Invasion*. It isn't.

Illuminati Volume II is more engaging than the other entries in the series but still fails at being persuasive. Everard's Illuminati is too vast and widely scattered. No effort is made to connect Parsons' Crowleyan mysticism to George W Bush's foreign policy, yet both are presented as members of the same group. A hodgepodge of sometimes contradictory theories is presented here and viewers will likely find it to be more confusing than compelling.

Barack Obama, King of Babylon: Illuminati Volume IV.

THE ILLUMINATI VOLUME IV: BROTHERHOOD OF THE BEAST (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Chris Everard
Production Company: Enigma TV

After dedicating the entirety of the third chapter of his *The Illuminati* series to Princess Diana conspiracy theories, Chris Everard returned to his original focus in 2010's *Brotherhood of the Beast*. The most intriguing aspect of the film is its cover. A large image of Barack Obama is superimposed over a HR Giger painting, the effect being that the President appears to have a pair of demonic horns. Faintly superimposed over Obama's face is a hermaphroditic Baphomet, aligned so that the horns are closest to his eyes and the breasts and phallus are clearly visible on his nose—the dead center of the image, where the human eye would naturally be drawn. The base of the picture consists of a burning city being bombed by planes that glow with a mysterious green light. Exciting stuff.

Brotherhood of the Beast fails to live up to the promise of its cover and is largely made up of material that is covered elsewhere in Everard's *oeuvre*, particularly in his *Spiritworld* series. The film is a history of magic, beginning at the dawn of humanity up through to the present day, used to prove his assertion that the Illuminati still practice long forgotten forms of ancient evil. Everard does manage to pick up a topic

briefly touched on in *Secret Space II*, his belief that the Iraq War was just a cover story for the Illuminati to seize ancient relics in Baghdad. *Brotherhood of the Beast* shows footage of American soldiers entering the vaults of the Baghdad Museum to find dozens of ancient vases, which Everard informs the viewers are actually genie bottles containing trapped demons.

Admittedly, much of this information is interesting but only barely related to the topic of conspiracies or even the Illuminati. Everard hits closer to the mark in a later segment on Bohemian Grove but quickly returns to discussions of alchemy and witchcraft in the Middle Ages. Finally, it is in the last five minutes of the film that he begins the discussion of the topics hinted at by the DVD cover. Everard explains that the Illuminati have been gathering occult knowledge for centuries with the express purpose of setting up a one world government ruled from England. The only time that any living figures are connected to the Illuminati is during the film's ending credits, where he links Hillary Clinton, George W Bush, Prince William of England, and Barack Obama, who he also refers to as "the King of Babylon." Again its intriguing stuff, it just arrives two hours too late.

WAKE UP CALL (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: John Nada
Production Company: None listed

Wake Up Call's opening titles could be placed before any Conspiracy Cinema film, and therefore I feel it appropriate to reproduce them here in full:

> WARNING! Do not watch this film if you rely on a rigid belief system to give your life a false sense of security and meaning. The information presented in this film is potentially life-changing but must be watched with an open mind. Unless you're willing to put everything you think you know temporarily on hold, and open up to the possibility that you may have been systematically deceived and lied to your entire life, this film is not for you.
>
> You are not expected to passively accept everything you see in this film, but are encouraged to begin looking into this information for yourself. Only when you begin open minded research of your

> own—and stop allowing your opinions to be made for you by authority figures, social 'norms,' and the mainstream media—will you even begin to grasp how thoroughly different this world is from what we've been led to believe.

Unfortunately, *Wake Up Call* doesn't live up to the promise of this introduction as it is a two and a half hour collection of footage from other Conspiracy Cinema films. Filmmaker John Nada's motives are in the right place; he's trying to create a "greatest hits" package of Conspiracy Cinema to give newcomers all the enlightenment they would need in a single dose. In that regard the film is very successful, but anyone familiar with the most popular films will have already seen almost all of this material elsewhere.

WHERE THE RICH AND FAMOUS DWELL (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Texe Marrs
Production Company: Power of Prophecy

Something different from Marrs—a look at the homes of the wealthy and powerful. Subtitled *Architectural Secrets of the Rothschilds, the Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers, the Astors and Other Storied Bloodlines & Dynasties*, the film is the Conspiracy Cinema equivalent of the television show *The Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous* as Marrs takes us through photo after photo of interiors and exteriors and explains the symbolism thereof. Marrs makes the expected digressions into Illuminati and Freemasonic territory before launching into the analysis of symbols, but once he does, fans of his brand of theorizing won't be disappointed. Marrs finds satanic and occult symbology everywhere he looks and, despite his tendency for exaggeration, there are only a few times in the film where he goes too far.

Where the Rich and Famous Dwell is, like most of Marrs' work, a lecture, but this one sees him narrating a collection of footage and images and it is therefore closer to an actual film. It's definitely better made than some of his others and he manages to add in many new images and symbols not seen in his earlier films. Marrs' film *Face to Face with the Devil* also deals with Illuminati symbolism in architecture.

The New World Order

The Facts

It is difficult to trace the genesis of the political term "new world order." It became a popular phrase used by American and British politicians during World War I and World War II to describe the social, political, and economic changes that would follow in their wake. In this regard, the term means any change to the existing global hegemony. The phrase was frequently used during the Cold War, which was seen as a battle to see which "new world order" would dominate the future, capitalism or communism.

"New world order" resurfaced as a more concrete idea in George H W Bush's September 11, 1990, speech to a joint session of the US Congress. Entitled "Toward a New World Order," the speech laid out a plan involving greater cooperation between nations facilitated by the United Nations. Bush's statements echoed European voices calling for similar policies, Bush's Soviet counterpart Mikhail Gorbachev in particular. Since Bush's speech, any political mention of the "new world order" is assumed to be in reference to political or economic globalization.

The Official Version

The term is intended most frequently to have a positive connotation when invoked. It is a system in which all nations are interconnected politically and economically, ensuring that freedom and prosperity are not the sole domain of the first world; the new world order is presented as the ultimate "win-win" scenario of global relations. In times of war, rogue states are dealt with through coalitions, lessening the burden of any one nation. In peacetime, pacts and treaties are enforced by global organizations such as the United Nations to guarantee all countries engage in fair trade, treat their citizens fairly, and are good stewards of the Earth's natural resources.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Despite its overwhelmingly positive meaning in the political sphere, the New World Order (capitalized here to clarify the difference between the conspiracy theory and the political buzzword) is the ultimate evil conspiracy for most theorists: the nefarious font from which all other conspiracies flow. The New World Order is the most popular unified field theory of conspiracism. Any conspiracy theory can (and has) been made a part of the New World Order theory, and theories often have their narratives recontextualized so that they are discussed in terms of how they advance the New World Order agenda.

But what exactly is the New World Order conspiracy theory? There is no simple answer, since the term means something different each time it is used. The most common meaning is that of an oppressive one world government, similar to the one depicted in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In these scenarios, global power is consolidated by an oligarchy for the purposes of keeping the world's population in a form of economic slavery. The style of government put in place varies from theory to theory, with the most commonly cited forms being socialism, fascism, or a mixture of the two. Some theorists believe the enactment of the New World Order will come as a result of a global war, but the most popular theories involve a gradual shift towards one world government that will be imperceptible to most people.

There is a consensus on the players involved in bringing about a New World Order, however. Any organization focused on international relations is suspect, and the groups most often associated with the New World Order are: the United Nations, the G-20, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the Bilderberg Group. The secrecy surrounding the last three has greatly increased their prominence in conspiracy theories and if a player in a given conspiracy is associated with them, that connection is considered proof of a conspiracy. Lending credence to the theories is the fact that many of these groups reference global government in their position statements. In addition to the aforementioned groups, any group that focuses on global issues ranging from the environment to economics, has at some time been linked to the New World Order. Though such theories are not unique to the United States, New World Order theories often have a decidedly American bent to them and the majority of theorists on the topic are

American.

The New World Order is also perhaps the oldest conspiracy theory. The first appearance of an inherently evil one world government is in the New Testament, specifically Revelations Chapter 13. The Antichrist is said to be given power over all nations, frequently interpreted to mean a one world government. Of particular importance in the chapter is the fabled "Mark of the Beast," seen as the harbinger of the New World Order. Any classification system used is touted as "the mark," from drivers licenses to Social Security numbers to, more recently, implantable RFID chips. The overlap between Christian eschatology and conspiracy theories regarding the New World Order is substantial, with even secular theorists citing biblical passages in their beliefs.

Note: The overwhelming majority of Conspiracy Cinema films featured in this work reference the New World Order at some point, therefore this chapter is dedicated to those films which make it their sole focus. Secondly, the term "New World Order" simultaneously refers to a plot to control the world and those individuals involved in the plot thus is used interchangeably to refer to both the concept and the group.

REVIEWS

AGENDA: GRINDING AMERICA DOWN (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Curtis Bowers
Production Company: Black Hat Films/Copybook Heading Productions

Conspiracy Cinema presents many groups as being the ultimate villains of the world depending on the theorist and the theory in question. Of the literally dozens to choose from, *Agenda: Grinding America Down* only invokes the name of one such group, the New World Order, once in its ninety minute presentation. That invocation is only to describe the New World Order as simply being the agenda of the *real* masterminds of evil: the Communists. Curtis Bowers, the filmmaker behind *Agenda*, sees the Communists as the main threat to American liberty and sovereignty and sets out to prove to the viewer that clandestine Commies are at work in the modern day.

After an introduction which praises Ronald Reagan's anti-Communist policies, *Agenda* shares how it learned the information on which the

film is based. Director Bowers states that in 1992 he attended a meeting at the University of California, Berkeley, during which the Communist Party USA was debating the best method by which to "take America down": a violent revolution or a more subtle approach. Per Bowers, the subtle approach won out, and the Communists began to promote ideas that would destroy America. Among these are cohabitation instead of marriage, feminism, the environmental movement, and the "homosexual agenda." The film places a lot of blame on the Democratic Party for facilitating the Communist takeover, but describes them as "useful idiots" rather than participants in the conspiracy.

Over the course of the remainder of the film, Bowers and commentators describe the structure of the Communist hierarchy and their agenda using a flow chart system. By the midpoint this chart is a veritable octopus linking all of America's ills per the film. Lines connecting Karl Marx, the KGB, the National Organization for Women, the National Endowment for the Arts, and illegal immigration show the viewer how practically every aspect of America in 2010 is the realization of the Communist agenda. As you would expect, the film sees the presidency of Barack Obama as the culmination of this agenda, and the conclusion of the film gives the audience a list of steps they can take to help fight the Communists.

Whether or not one believes in the claims of *Agenda: Grinding America Down* is going to depend entirely on their political and religious beliefs. It is only attempting to prove the existence of a conspiracy, and is aimed at those who already believe things like abortion and homosexuality are morally wrong. Although it is aimed at people already inclined to believe its theories, *Agenda* contains a surprising amount of "weasel words" designed to mislead the viewer. Phrases like "few would argue that…" and "everyone knows…" are the film's favorites, and one wonders why it would feel the need to engage in such attempts at persuasion with a sympathetic audience. The filmmakers behind *Agenda* likely don't consider themselves conspiracy theorists but the ideas presented in their film—and the rampant paranoia on display—firmly puts this film in the world of Conspiracy Cinema.

THE BIG PICTURE: FINAL CUT (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Max Igan
Production Company: Earth's Forbidden Secrets

The Big Picture attempts to analyze and reconcile the multitude of New World Order theories into a single, coherent one, and therefore combines a lot of concepts not typically seen together in Conspiracy Cinema films. The most notable of these is a discussion early in the film of "Planet X," known sometimes in conspiracy/UFO circles as Nibiru. Planet X/Nibiru is alleged to either impact with or pass close to the Earth in 2012, resulting in cataclysmic changes. After explaining the many theories on Nibiru—both the scientific and the supernatural—Igan ultimately concedes that no one can know for certain what will happen and, if they did, they couldn't do anything about it.

Igan writes off Nibiru, 2012 speculation, and all eschatology as a tool of the New World Order because it serves as a distraction from real events. Those preoccupied with 2012 are likely not paying very much attention to the present conspiracies at work, Igan argues, which is exactly what the New World Order wants. *The Big Picture* then continues for the remainder of its running time to present the other New World Order agendas such as depopulation, one world government, and a police state, and Igan looks at several more specific conspiracies like 9-11 and 7-7 as well.

The Big Picture is largely made of clips from other Conspiracy Cinema films with Igan's narration added. That isn't necessarily a bad thing, however. What Igan adds can't be underestimated as he gives a thorough analysis of each theory from a sceptical perspective, weighing the pros and cons of each. His final conclusions about most of these heavily favor the conspiracy theory over the official version, but his attempts at objectivity are appreciated. There is nothing particularly unique about *The Big Picture* but it is successful in its goal of summarizing the most popular theories.

ENDGAME: BLUEPRINT FOR GLOBAL ENSLAVEMENT (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Endgame is a Conspiracy Cinema version of a historical documentary and its goal is to trace evidence of the New World Order back as far as possible. For such a journey, one would be hard-pressed to find a more knowledgeable guide than Alex Jones, yet, surprisingly, Jones defers most of the analysis to journalist "Big" Jim Tucker. Tucker was one of the first to regularly report on the Bilderberg Group and claims

to be able to know accurately the future course of world politics from the information gleaned at their meetings.

Endgame is as much Tucker's film as it is Jones' and most of the film is dedicated to the pair attempting to gain access to the 2007 Bilderberg meeting and to interviews with like-minded protesters. When not examining the Bilderbergers, *Endgame* has a far more global focus than is typically seen in Conspiracy Cinema. Jones gives the political histories of African and Asian nations equal time with those of Western nations, and the result is not only a more complete analysis, but a far more convincing film as well. Far too often is the New World Order depicted as a plot simply against the United States and Great Britain, an approach that has the unintended consequence of making the theory seem less plausible.

Since it is structured as an investigative journalism piece on the 2007 Bilderberg meeting, long stretches of *Endgame* are taken up with footage of the outside of buildings and high-end automobiles containing unidentified persons. Jones correctly points out that the Bilderberg meeting is a much bigger news story in countries other than the US and the UK, a fact that may or may not help convince viewers of the validity of the film's theories. Ultimately, *Endgame* is an effective examination of New World Order conspiracy theories involving non-western nations, but is too dominated by Alex Jones screaming at buildings and passing cars to be essential viewing.

INVISIBLE EMPIRE: A NEW WORLD ORDER DEFINED (2010)

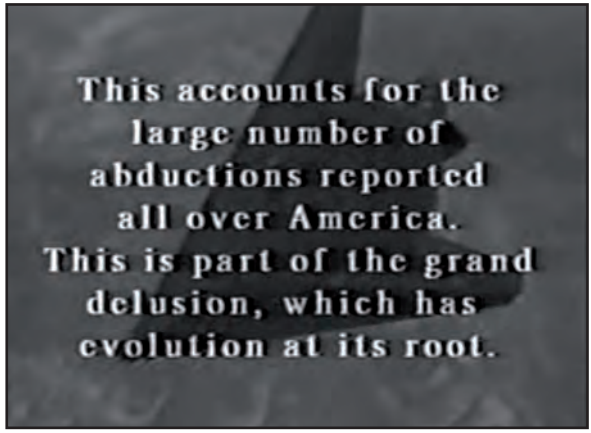
Filmmaker/Director: Jason Bermas
Production Company: Infowars

To date, Jason Bermas is the only *Loose Change* filmmaker to work on Conspiracy Cinema projects other than the continual revision of that landmark film. He has since released two other Conspiracy Cinema films, and the first to deal with topics outside the 9-11 conspiracy spheres was *Invisible Empire: a New World Order Defined*. The word "defined" is key as Bermas' film functions not unlike a dictionary for New World Order conspiracies, covering a vast array of topics to a superficial depth. The same approach helped *Loose Change* reach an unprecedented number of viewers, but as we will see, *Invisible Empire* is a film without an audience.

Invisible Empire opens with a pre-credit sequence that sees Bermas explaining the origins of this project and giving an unsubtle plug for *Loose Change*. The film proper starts with Kennedy's oft-repeated "secret society speech" from 1961 before segueing into a tightly-edited montage of world leaders past and present using the term "new world order." As is the case with most Conspiracy Cinema films, it is simply taken for granted that the "new world order" is synonymous with the evil New World Order and these usages are explained as a case of the participants inadvertently dropping the veil of secrecy. The film then shifts to a largely chronological narrative, tracing the history of the New World Order from the global Reich dream of Nazi Germany to the modern usage of the term by George HW Bush. The pace here is fast, placing the information in an accurate context is often sacrificed to include a clip of an obscure talking head using the term. Bermas then attempts to give structure to the nebulous form of the New World Order by explaining the Bilderberg Group, the Trilateral Commission, and the host of other such groups typically associated with it.

At the one hour mark, *Invisible Empire* enters into its most interesting portion: case studies of New World Order activity. First up is an incredibly detailed examination of the Iran-Contra Affair assembled from primary source news footage and interviews. It is here that the film begins to distinguish itself and the intelligent manner in which Bermas presents the information is effective without being overstated. Using Iran-Contra as a starting point, he's able to explore several other interconnected conspiracy theories—and conspiracy facts—such as the CIA creation of the Mujahedeen, the attempted assassination of President Reagan, and the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Bermas doesn't "connect the dots" between all of these events for the audience, but rather shows them that the dots are there, allowing them to consider the existence of a conspiracy on their own. The frantic pace of *Invisible Empire* works in the film's favor during this section as the average viewer is more likely to have an existing familiarity with these events, allowing Bermas to simply imply their interrelatedness.

The final section of *Invisible Empire* sees Bermas delve into the Obama administration, technological advances, global warming, secret societies, and the relation of all to the New World Order agenda. The investigation into secret societies and technology has the film brush up closely to Christian theology in its discussions of occult activity and the Mark of



Aliens and evolution: part of the New World Order plan? Iron Mountain—Blueprint for Tyranny.

the Beast, but the film remains firmly secular in its presentation. *Invisible Empire* does, however, veer into the unfortunate territory of homophobia with a look at Congressmen Barney Frank and Mark Foley. This segment, though brief, is quite jarring as it seems to be attempting to link homosexuality as both a part of the New World Order and inherently evil. There are, of course, a number of Conspiracy Cinema films that do exactly that, but this segment feels out of place in the otherwise irreligious film.

Invisible Empire is a sharply edited and engaging film, cinematically on par with *Loose Change* and miles ahead of it in terms of the strength of the information presented. If the film has a flaw, it is that it appears not to know who its audience is. The topic of the New World Order lacks the immediacy of something like 9-11; viewers have no direct connection to it since it is a concept rather than an event. Furthermore, *Invisible Empire* was originally sold on DVD rather than distributed for free. While it has since become available on multiple sites, the initial for-pay model meant that a potential viewer had to be curious enough about the New World Order to purchase the film, rather than simply stumble upon it while surfing YouTube. The combination of these two factors meant that the majority of those drawn to *Invisible Empire* likely were already very familiar with the information presented. The film organizes its theories well, but adds nothing to them not already seen in countless Conspiracy Cinema films already in existence or that could be found through a quick search of the internet. Conspiracy neophytes will be engrossed by the film, but anyone with even a passing familiarity with

New World Order conspiracy theories will find it unnecessary at best.

IRON MOUNTAIN—BLUEPRINT FOR TYRANNY (1993)

Filmmaker/Director: Stewart Best
Production Company: Christian Intelligence Video Art

When it was first released, much of *Iron Mountain—Blueprint for Tyranny* seemed fanciful at best. Crackdowns on personal freedoms, constant surveillance, and a global environmental crisis could never happen, right? Bible prophecy scholar and Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker Stewart Best again came far closer to predicting the future than perhaps even he realized. Many things mentioned in the film haven't happened (yet?) but those that have occurred will have an eerie resonance with the viewer, causing them to stay rapt during the film's nearly three hour running time.

The Report from Iron Mountain: On the Possibility and Desirability of Peace was a book released anonymously in 1967 that has since been credited to author Leonard Lewin. The majority of opinion on the book, which outlines a government plan to keep the United States in a period of constant war and virtual slavery, is that it is a hoax. Best, like many other theorists before him, believes that the hoax is a hoax, and that *Iron Mountain* explains the truth about the government's shadowy plans.

Iron Mountain—Blueprint for Tyranny examines the claims of the *Report* in exacting detail, giving real world examples of how they've been implemented in the years since its release. The growing power of the United Nations is a frequent topic, as is the melding of the police and military, something that in the years following the film would become Alex Jones' main focus. The film is a veritable smorgasbord of every stripe of conspiracy theory and, admittedly, can be tedious at times. Well-versed conspiracy theorists may find the film too basic for their liking, but newcomers will find it to be an excellent primer on the New World Order.

MIND CONTROL: OUT OF CONTROL (2001)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: None listed

This videotaped lecture has been circulated under several titles,

Mind Control: Out of Control, *survivor Cathy O'Brien.*

the most common being *Mind Control: Out of Control*. It is especially notable for featuring Mark Phillips and Cathy O'Brien, authors of the book *TranceFormation of America*, the seminal text on mind control. O'Brien is one of the most respected and well-known theorists on the topic of mind control and claims to have firsthand knowledge of the practice and those involved. O'Brien claims to have been an MK ULTRA victim, used as a sexual slave and human computer by the New World Order. *TranceFormation of America* is famous in conspiracy circles because it named members of the New World Order and the kind of things they were really up to—George HW Bush, Bill Clinton, Dick Cheney, baseball star Nolan Ryan, and country music star Lee Greenwood are all outed as satanists, pedophiles, and New World Order members in the book.

Mind Control: Out of Control is just one of the many filmed lectures that O'Brien has given, but it is by far the most famous. As usual, her husband Mark Phillips speaks first to give the message some context and perspective. O'Brien's talk is the main attraction, however. Like in *TranceFormation of America*, she speaks openly and frankly about her sexual abuse although she omits graphic descriptions here. O'Brien tells the shortened version of her life story in *Mind Control: Out of Control*. She states that her father sold her into sexual slavery to the New World Order as a child, she underwent mind control techniques at their hands, and, later in life, one of her multiple personalities was used by them as a messenger and recorder. It is in the latter aspect that O'Brien claims that she was privy to the secret plans of the New World Order and knew in advance about top-secret programs like the Stealth bomber.

Mind Control: Out of Control is an extremely engaging lecture. O'Brien tells her story almost without pause, and her impassioned delivery will be convincing for most viewers. O'Brien certainly believes her

story, never mentioning the fact that proving it would be impossible. So varied is the cast of characters in her story that it reads like a who's who of political figures, sports stars, and musicians from the eighties, making her claims about them harder to take than if they were simply unknown assailants. *Mind Control: Out of Control* is a short, intriguing way to familiarize oneself with New World Order mind control theories, as O'Brien discusses them all in the course of her talk.

THE NEW WORLD ODOR (1997)

Filmmaker/Director: Anthony J Hilder
Production Company: Free World Film Works

The New World ODOR (the word 'odor' capitalized) is a sit-down interview with former Idaho Congressman George V Hansen, author of two books critical of the IRS. Hansen is best known for serving a little over a year in federal prison for failing to disclose financial information, a conviction later overturned by the Supreme Court. Hilder and Hansen aren't talking about the IRS in the film but the New World Order, specifically China's role in the plan. Both men see the warming of relations between the US and China during the Clinton administration as the beginning of the end, the same conclusion Alex Jones reached in one of his first films, *America: Destroyed by Design* from 1998. Just as Jones had, Hilder and Hansen take issue with the presence of COSCO, the China Ocean Shipping Company, in California. The company is referred to as using "slave labor," and the argument could be made that Hilder is correct in his usage of the term.

Much of *The New World ODOR* is a look at Chinese political repression, held up by Hilder as being a preview of the policies the New World Order is working to implement globally. At the one hour mark, the film shifts unexpectedly to a look at black militant Dr Khallid Muhammad, referred to by Hilder as "America's Black Hitler." Hilder identifies black separatist movements as a key facet of the New World Order agenda, and even debated Muhammad at his Los Angeles church, documented in Hilder's film *Kill the White Man: Hitler vs. Hilder*. Clips from that film are featured here and again Hilder links Muhammad's message to the goals of the New World Order and claims that he receives funding from the same rich whites he claims to despise. Surprisingly, both Hilder and the ultra-conservative Hansen have nothing but praise for the controversial Minister Louis Farrakhan. Perhaps

it isn't too surprising given that Farrakhan and Hilder share similar views on the United States government and the New World Order.

The New World ODOR has an unusually weak ending for a Hilder film. The discussion turns to the Oklahoma City bombing and government tracking devices, but this material isn't as strong as the earlier discussions. The film does have a few dull moments and could be paced better, but these are most often due to Hansen, not Hilder.

NEW WORLD ORDER FACTS (year unknown, c. 2003)

Filmmaker/Director: Keith Thompson
Production Company: Freedom Fire

Theorist Keith Thompson's take on the New World Order begins, as so many Conspiracy Cinema films on the topic have, with a montage of political leaders using the term. This appears to be the only proof of its existence he is able to provide and instead of exploring the topic further, the film shifts to 9-11 conspiracy theories. *New World Order Facts* is notable because of the explicitly religious slant it takes, offering up Bible verses more often than conspiracy theories. Per Thompson, we are currently living under the New World Order system and have been since September 11, 2001; a unique take on things since most films on the subject see it as a future occurrence.

The film concludes with a listing of the organizations typically associated with the New World Order: Skull & Bones, the Freemasons, the Council on Foreign Relations, and visitors to Bohemian Grove. *New World Order Facts*' final messages implore the viewer to accept Christ and, curiously, not to masturbate.

Thompson has several other films on the topic. *NWO Shills, Liars, and Deceivers* "exposes" other conspiracy theorists such as David Icke, Jordan Maxwell, and Alex Jones as tools of the New World Order agenda. His films *Exposing the Satanic Empire*, *New Age Infiltration of the Truth Movement*, and *The REAL Agenda of the New World Order* all take the same approach, and are more commentaries on conspiracy theorists than theories.

NO ID FOUND (1994)

Filmmaker/Director: Steve Ward
Production Company: Second Coming Ministries

Alternate title for No ID Found.

New World Order conspiracy theories from a Christian perspective. Host Del Bock conducts a ninety minute interview with Terry L Cook, author of several books on the New World Order. Bock and Cook spend the majority of the interview talking about how implantable microchips will be used as currency or identification in the very near future, Cook even producing a prototype chip and scanner for maximum impact. Mark of the Beast/implant discussion dominates *No ID Found* as do lengthy discussions of the relevant Biblical passages.

Cook often steers the conversation towards a more general examination of the New World Order. He produces a hierarchy chart of the New World Order and affiliated organizations, a list that features Bill Clinton as being second in command to David Rockefeller. Cook and Bock agree that the plans the New World Order are making seem to be particularly slanted against Christians, and at various points in the film they refer to the group as satanists.

The topic invariably returns to the Mark of the Beast and, for 1994, the film would have been one of the better resources for curious conspiracy theorists. There are many Christian films dedicated to New World Order theories, and *No ID Found* is one of the few that is more conspiratorial than ministerial. There is a prominent religious aspect in the discussion, but it is not to a degree that would make the film unwatchable for secular theorists.

No ID Found is sometimes misattributed to Anthony J Hilder, perhaps being confused for his similarly titled film *666: Mark of the Beast*. The print I viewed had a computer graphic introduction listing the film's

title as *Satan's System 666* that bore a strong resemblance to those found on Hilder's films, possibly muddying the waters further.

ONE NATION UNDER SIEGE (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: William Lewis
Production Company: William Lewis Films

It would be easier to list the conspiracy theories that *One Nation Under Siege* doesn't cover than those that it does. William Lewis approaches practically every aspect of modern American society as evidence of the New World Order agenda at work. Though one typically sees such arguments made about the Obama administration, *One Nation Under Siege* is notable for accusing the Bush administration of attempting to usher in global socialism, which is presented here as the ultimate form of evil, the New World Order "endgame." In proving his theory, Lewis is particularly critical of the education system, which he refers to as a form of indoctrination to instil socialist and anti-religious views in children. He points to the growing number of children being prescribed psychiatric medications as part of the New World Order agenda to control the population, beginning with the youth.

It isn't just children under attack, as Lewis implicates the media, the military, and corporations as all playing a part in the conspiracy as well. *One Nation Under Siege* tackles a broad range of theories, from an examination into the Pentagon attack on 9-11 to FEMA camps to vaccinations. These investigations are cursory and only used to link these ideas to the larger New World Order agenda. Touching on so many and varied topics briefly highlights the fact that *One Nation Under Siege* is made for conspiracy theorists, not the general public. This complicates an analysis of the film significantly. It isn't trying to persuade since those watching will already ascribe to the theories presented and it isn't trying to educate since they will, of course, already be aware of them. This brings into question the necessity of the film. It offers no new information about any of the theories presented and its main goal appears to be summary rather than elucidation.

Another issue with *One Nation Under Siege* is that it is significantly tilted towards Americans, the United States being the titular nation. Granted, the same could be said about dozens of films, but a jingoistic perspective is counterproductive for a film on the New World Order—

Ring of Power.

emphasis on the "world." To only be concerned about one's own nation in a Conspiracy Cinema film is both exclusionist and somewhat misguided, as it ignores the many supporting cases one could pick from, places like Canada and Great Britain.

RING OF POWER (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Anonymous (Grace Powers)
Production Company: Amenstop Productions

An over five hour collection of Conspiracy Cinema clips, old movies, and classic television shows illustrating the existence and goals of the New World Order. Spanning four DVDs, *Ring of Power* covers as much ground as you'd expect, touching on 9-11, the Vatican, British royalty, and Biblical history over the course of its ten episodes. The title is a reference to narrator/producer Grace Powers' father's Masonic ring, curiosity about which led her to do the research that eventually became *Ring of Power*.

Things begin with 9-11 conspiracy theories, all of which stay within the expected parameters of such a discussion but ultimately pointing toward Israeli responsibility for the attack. Religion is the focus of the discussion in episodes two through five, which reveal the unknown influence of the Vatican and Queen Elizabeth II and the connection between the two. Episode three has elicited the biggest response from the conspiracy community, as Powers revises both Biblical and Egyptian history to make the two overlap. She identifies correlations

between Biblical figures such as Moses and Abraham and certain Pharaohs, stating that they are, in reality, the same people. An interesting theory, but one that is refuted by most historians, although the film presents a joint Hebrew/Egyptian dynasty as widely accepted.

Ring of Power eventually connects the British royals to the Pharaohs and it begins to become clear that the film's central theory is that all of the world's rulers are Jewish. This message is made more overt as the film progresses, and, by its final chapter, *Ring of Power* begins using phrases like "the Zionist plot for world domination" interchangeably with the New World Order. Not necessarily an anti-Semitic film, *Ring of Power* claims that the New World Order is made up of a small group of Zionists, not all Jewish people, and, with the exception of the group's makeup, it presents theories not far removed from most New World Order Conspiracy Cinema films. *Ring of Power* concludes with a list of "solutions" to reverse the spread of the New World Order, most of which involve not participating in finance, politics, or religion.

The name of the production company, Amenstop, is a reference to the film's claim that the word "amen" is derived from the Egyptian god Amun. This word is shared between Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and *Ring of Power* states that all three are actually cults of Amun.

SECRETS OF THE MATRIX: DAVID ICKE LIVE AT BRIXTON ACADEMY (2003)

Filmmaker/Director: David Icke
Production Company: None listed

It would be impossible to have a book about conspiracies and not mention David Icke at some point. Icke is Great Britain's most well known conspiracy theorist, UFOlogist, and paranormal expert, is a best-selling author, and has appeared in dozens of Conspiracy Cinema films. A former professional footballer and broadcaster, Icke first caught the public's attention when he proclaimed himself to be the "son of God" in 1991 and he began to be notable in conspiracism after his 1994 book *The Robot's Rebellion* presented a version of New World Order conspiracy theories. Icke has written dozens of books and made many provocative claims, but if there is one with which he is most closely associated it is the reptilians. Beginning with 1999's *The Biggest Secret*, Icke became the most notable proponent of the theory that the Illuminati were ac-

tually reptilian aliens from a planet in the constellation Draco. Icke's reptilians have the ability to shapeshift to appear human, and he claims many of the world's leaders are, in fact, these reptilian aliens.

Icke's presence in Conspiracy Cinema is large, but those films he has released himself consist exclusively of filmed lectures, the magnum opus of which is his 2003 *Secrets of the Matrix*. Icke rarely pauses to take a breath during the over six hour talk and he eventually addresses every conspiracy theory possible. *Secrets of the Matrix* is divided into three two-hour segments, the first of which gives the historical background of many of the concepts Icke speaks about, including the New World Order, the Illuminati, and the Freemasons. Icke uses a slideshow presentation to display his key concepts, and for the majority of this first section he refers to a pyramid outlining the hierarchy of "the Global Satanic Ritual Pedophile Network," which includes the aforementioned groups in addition to politicians and the media.

The second section of *Secrets of the Matrix* goes more in depth on the topic of 9-11 and its relation to the overall plans of the New World Order. Icke's investigation of 9-11 is thorough, but his take on the event yields nothing outside the standard conspiracy theories. It is in the final chapter that Icke begins his discussion on the reptilians, identifying them as the behind-the-scenes orchestrators of the conspiracies he's discussed for the past four hours. Icke also refers extensively to the action film *The Matrix*, claiming that it is an accurate representation of the reality in which we live.

The thing that makes *Secrets of the Matrix* more useful than Icke's other DVDs is that it serves as a complete summation of his work. Other films focus exclusively on either the reptilian theories or conspiracy theories; therefore *Secrets of the Matrix* should satisfy the curiosity of those looking for an overview of Icke's ideas. Being exhaustive seems to be Icke's hallmark—his books are hundreds of pages long, and his films are rarely shorter than four hours. For that reason, many viewers may want to stick with Icke's appearances in other Conspiracy Cinema films, saving things like *Secrets of the Matrix* for more adventurous viewers.

THE SECRET UNDERGROUND LECTURES OF COMMANDER X (2004)

Filmmaker/Director: Commander X
Production Company: Global Communications

Outlined in the introductory crawl, author "Commander X" was one of the first members of the CIA's remote viewing project, and his *Secret Underground Lectures* expose the various secrets he learned during his tenure. Canned applause rises and fades as we get our first glimpse of the Commander, his face blacked out and his voice digitally masked "for reasons of security." The lecture Commander X gives is a summary of New World Order theories placed in the context of the Bush administration, the Patriot Act, and the War on Terror. A fair amount of time is spent on RFID microchipping, and Commander X claims that those with the chip can be electronically tracked and controlled remotely. One need not receive the chip to be electronically harassed, however, as he explains that orbiting satellites can tamper with the brain frequencies of those deemed "undesirable" by the government. Commander X eventually shifts his focus to otherworldly matters, discussing UFOs, alien technology, and the reptilians. Thankfully, images and video have been added in post-production, otherwise the viewer would be forced to listen to a disembodied Polo shirt for ninety minutes.

Nothing presented in *The Secret Underground Lectures of Commander X* could be considered groundbreaking. Anyone who had spent a moderate amount of time researching conspiracy theories would easily have been able to spin the same yarn as Commander X does in the film. Commander X's books offer a wider variety of conspiracy theories and proof thereof, making this film especially anticlimactic.

There is some controversy about the identity of Commander X. Those who take a dim view of the author think that he is simply the pseudonym of *Conspiracy Journal* editor Timothy Green Beckley. Others have attributed Commander X to UFO author Jim Keith, but Keith passed away in 1999 and the Commander X books have continued. There are some who believe that the works of Commander X, this film included, are all intended as satire. Regardless, *The Secret Underground Lectures of Commander X* is more valuable as a piece of conspiracy memorabilia than for the information it presents.

SHADOW GOVERNMENT (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: André van Heerden
Production Company: Cloud Ten Pictures

Shadow Government contains several "docudrama" moments as

examples of how completely monitored modern society has become. Per the film, every citizen of industrialized nations has a personal data file maintained by one of the major private data collection firms. These files contain everything from vital statistics to financial data to what brand of soda you prefer, but the main point of the film is that the file the government has on you is much larger and more detailed. *Shadow Government* presents a world where everything the individual does is monitored and studied by corporations and the government, often working together.

Shadow Government presents several compelling examples where an individual's privacy may have been violated without their knowledge. One of which is heavily promoted by the corporation that did it: Google Flu Trends. In 2008, Google discovered that they could detect flu outbreaks faster than the Center for Disease Control by simply analyzing search terms used by people in a specific geographical region. A useful application, but users were unaware that their data was being analyzed. *Shadow Government* cites Google's cozy relationship with the NSA (National Security Agency) as a potential warning sign that their data collection efforts may have more sinister applications in the future.

As *Shadow Government* progresses its true purposes become clearer and it begins to present New World Order conspiracies from a Christian perspective. The end of the film is dedicated entirely to Biblical eschatology, but hopefully viewers with different beliefs will not be discouraged from viewing the film. *Shadow Government* presents some of the most well-articulated arguments against a surveillance society to appear in a Conspiracy Cinema film. Granted, the fictionalized docudrama segments that are shown throughout the film are poorly realized, yet the meat of the argument is of the highest quality. Unfortunately, the film doesn't give any suggestions on how to avoid having one's every movement recorded and analyzed. Even more unfortunate is the realization that a solution may not exist.

SLAVERY BY CONSENT (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: The Wake Up Project
Production Company: Bushwackk Productions

As is true for roughly one-quarter of the films in this book, *Slavery by Consent* opens with a clip from *The Matrix*. The particular clip

in question here is the one most often used: Morpheus asking Neo to choose between the red pill (the truth) and the blue pill (ignorance). *Slavery by Consent*, like its companions, shoves the red pill down the throats of any viewers who continue watching as it purports to expose the systems of control in everyone's lives. The film espouses what is essentially a "free man on the land" perspective, advocating that viewers remove themselves from society and proclaim that laws no longer apply to them. Examples of individuals utilizing their emancipated status are shown, including one particularly interesting example of a Canadian avoiding the penalties for driving without a license, registration, or automobile tag.

The film states that the reason for the need to declare oneself a "free man" is because the United States, Canada, and Great Britain consider their citizens to be merely collateral. It is at this point that the film dives head first into New World Order conspiracy theories, presenting footage from other theorists and Conspiracy Cinema films as evidence of the New World Order system at work. Lincoln and Kennedy assassination theories are discussed, as are the 9-11 attacks and the Iraq War. All are held up as examples of the existence of a plan for world domination, though the New World Order isn't specifically mentioned by name. *Slavery by Consent* focuses mainly on corporations and governments, but the system of monetary, religious, and social control described in the film is undeniably a New World Order conspiracy theory.

Slavery by Consent is an impressively filmed and edited work. It more closely resembles the slick production values of a television program than a Conspiracy Cinema film, and the quality of the production will make it more likely to resonate with viewers. Also of note is the variety of perspectives given in the film. Muslim clerics are given equal time with Christian televangelists and the film's ultimate message is one of hope rather than fear. An engaging viewing experience despite the fact that some of the film's claims are unverifiable.

UNITED WE FALL (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Bryan Law
Production Company: Press for Truth

The North American Union is a proposed economic merger of the United States, Canada, and Mexico into a group similar to the Euro-

pean Union. As with the EU, the theoretical "NAU" quickly became a hot topic in conspiracy circles, where it was seen as a preliminary step to implementing a one world government. Interest in the theory first became prominent during the early days of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but NAU theories have continued into the present day and are notable because they are one of the few conspiracy theories to receive regular mention on CNN, Fox News, *et al*. Politically conservative pundits see the potential NAU as the end of the sovereignty of the US, taking the exact same position as the conspiracy theorists they typically deride.

United We Fall is an interesting film because it presents an anti-NAU message from a new perspective: the Canadian one. The overwhelming majority of criticism for the NAU originates in the United States so viewers will find it refreshing to hear arguments about Canada's sovereignty being threatened for a change. The presenters in the film point out that current bilateral and trilateral trade agreements have hurt Canada economically, and state that the same is true for Mexico. The United States emerges as the de facto villain in the film's first half, pursuing unfair agreements with Canada and Mexico to rob them of their natural resources.

In its second half, *United We Fall* moves on to the topic of the New World Order. In an attempt at impartiality, the film interviews Bilderberg Group member Allan Gotlieb, who attempts to downplay the group's influence and is shown as (intentionally?) misrepresenting the number of meetings he attended. For reasons not entirely clear, Gotlieb points the finger at the Council on Foreign Relations as being the only non-governmental organization with significant influence. Other speakers give a more traditional take on the New World Order, and *United We Fall* addresses 9-11 conspiracies, biometric identification, the Illuminati, and the Freemasons.

In addition to its unique perspective, *United We Fall* is a well-crafted film that makes some compelling arguments about the downsides to a North American Union. It is really two films in one: an objective look at the NAU, and a Conspiracy Cinema film about the New World Order. It does both equally well but the juxtaposition between the two is perhaps too severe to reconcile. The filmmaker's admirable attempts to present both sides of the NAU issue is significantly undercut by segments where the New World Order is spoken about nonchalantly as if

it is something with which everyone is familiar and, therefore, needs not be proven. It also seems strange that a film that presents the New World Order as the ultimate evil would have such a pleasant conversation with a member of the Bilderberg Group. In *United We Fall*'s attempt at being the best of both worlds, it only manages to be moderately good at either but is commendable for the effort.

ZEITGEIST: THE MOVIE (2007)

ZEITGEIST: ADDENDUM (2008)

ZEITGEIST: MOVING FORWARD (2011)

Filmmaker/Director: Peter Joseph
Production Company: GMP, LLC

Few Conspiracy Cinema films have been as popular—or as controversial—as the *Zeitgeist* series by Peter Joseph. Part conspiracy theory, part utopian blueprint for humanity, what originally began as a 9-11 Conspiracy Cinema film has morphed into something far greater, spawning the Zeitgeist Movement in the wake of 2008's *Addendum*. Unlike most conspiracy theories, which are assailed from the outside, much of the criticism about *Zeitgeist* has come from within the conspiracy community, where many believe it to be a piece of disinformation or New World Order propaganda.

Most of the ire in the conspiracy community has been directed at Part One of *Zeitgeist: the Movie* which purports that Christianity is based on ancient pagan sun cults. While entire volumes can and have been dedicated to the similarities between Christianity and other religions, filmmaker Joseph decided not to read any of them and presents his own deeply flawed research. The film's detractors claim as many as fifty factual errors in this opening section, but regardless of the tally, the damage is done after a single instance. Almost all Conspiracy Cinema operates under the concept that if any part of one's film can be disproven, it is all false, and those who have taken Joseph to task follow this same ethic. It is important to note that many take issue with the very premise of this section, being that most New World Order conspiracy theories borrow heavily from Christianity, and Christian viewpoints are typically the standard in most theories.

The second and third sections of the film deal with 9-11 and New World Order theories, respectively, each not veering far from the standard theories and modes of representation found in other Conspiracy Cinema films. The first section remains problematic even if one doesn't dismiss it out of hand for factual errors or as "blasphemy." The placement of the information implies that it is more important than later segments, causing one to wonder how an anti-religious message ties into the information presented by the rest of the film. The conclusion of the film makes a tenuous argument that religion is in some way responsible for many problems in the world, but *Zeitgeist* presents this matter-of-factly and offers no validation for the claim.

The film's message resonated with many, however, and *Zeitgeist* received more mainstream media attention than any Conspiracy Cinema film since *Loose Change*—ironically, another film some conspiracy theorists dismiss as disinformation. The sequels, *Addendum* and *Moving Forward*, abandon conspiracy theory altogether and primarily advocate Jacque Fresco's Venus Project. The Venus Project argues for a "resource-based economy," which the film's detractors immediately jumped on as the proof of *Zeitgeist*'s hidden New World Order agenda coming to light. That might not be mere speculation; the Venus Project's goal sounds eerily like the New World Order plan for a one world government as presented by dozens of Conspiracy Cinema films. None of the film's detractors have been able to prove that Joseph is guilty of anything worse than sloppy research so far, and the mixed reaction *Moving Forward* received upon its release means that the debate about *Zeitgeist* is far from over.

For Conspiracy Cinema films presenting an opposite view, see Elliot Nesch's *Zeitgeist Refuted—Final Cut*, Lion and Lamb TV's *Trilogy of Truth: Debunking the Zeitgeist Movie*, and Keith Thompson's *Zeitgeist Debunked as False*.

III

LESSER CONSPIRACIES

There are theories that are often just seen as corollaries of the grand schemes—secondary goals of the Illuminati, as it were. That certainly isn't meant to imply that these theories are in any way less important, since they all will have their champions. The films in this section are just as passionately made as those that have come before, yet they are typically shorter in length and better paced.

This section will include conspiracy theories about politics, media, religion, secret societies, the military, finance, the environment, and health issues. Since the focus of these chapters and the films therein is considerably broader, explanations of theories will only be given in selected cases.

Conspiracies in Politics and the Media

REVIEWS

AMERICAN BLACKOUT (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Ian Inaba
Production Company: Guerilla News Network

American Blackout tackles the 2000 and 2004 American Presidential elections from a different perspective. Several conspiracy theorists have offered their takes on those events, but *American Blackout* focuses on perhaps the most egregious conspiracy associated with them: the intentional disenfranchisement of African-American voters. In the film, the controversies in Florida and Ohio are presented as racist conspiracies to deny black voters access to the polls or to simply not count their ballots for the benefit of the Republican Party, specifically George W Bush.

In addition to a conspiracy to disenfranchise black voters, *American Blackout* argues that one of the most outspoken African-American Congresswomen, Cynthia McKinney, had her career cut short for questioning the Bush administration's foreknowledge of 9-11. This aspect of McKinney's career has been documented in several Conspiracy Cinema films, but *American Blackout* dedicates more time, proving that McKinney was the target of a Republican political hit. An interviewee states that Republicans were urged to vote in the state's Democratic primary to ensure that McKinney did not receive her party's nomination. Illegal, no, but certainly a dirty trick and one that furthers the film's case that the Republican Party would resort to any means necessary to further their goals.

McKinney dominates most of *American Blackout* but it is the film's claims of disenfranchisement that are most intriguing and conspiratorial. The film is structured and paced well, although most viewers will see the focus on McKinney as a missed opportunity. Her story is certainly worthy of attention, but by the time *American Blackout* was produced she had already received that attention in several other films.

African-American voter disenfranchisement is a much more important subject and, unfortunately, one that has not been sufficiently tackled by a Conspiracy Cinema film yet.

AMERICAN DICTATORS: DOCUMENTING THE STAGED ELECTION OF 2004 (2004)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Alex Jones saw a conspiracy in the Presidential election of 2004 before it even took place. George W Bush and John Kerry were essentially the candidate, he argued. There is some merit to that argument. Both Bush and Kerry were incredibly wealthy Caucasian men who both graduated from Yale. They were also both members of the elite fraternity/secret society, Skull & Bones. Something about having to choose between two frat brothers rubbed Jones the wrong way, and *American Dictators* documents his interviews with others who felt the same way.

American Dictators sees Jones venture back to Bohemian Grove to continue digging for answers. Jones was only there to shoot a segment for the film, but he has an encounter with the local fire department that is intriguing. Jones asks them about the Grove only to be threatened and told to turn off the camera. He is persistent, however, and he manages to get some thoughts on the Grove from a pair of very inebriated locals. Jones then moves on to the candidates themselves, presenting evidence that Bush and Kerry have similar politics despite being in different parties. Having proved that both candidates are working towards the same goals, *American Dictators* spends the rest of its running time exploring what those goals are in the form of New World Order and 9-11 conspiracies.

American Dictators feels less polished and more slapdash than other films by Jones. The interviewees are a diverse group, as are the topics they speak on, and Jones seems to have included anyone he was able to get. There seems to be no other explanation for including insightful interviews with Ralph Nader and Cynthia McKinney side by side with overlong talks with actor Gary Busey and jam band Ozomatli. Less convincing than the several other films Jones has made on these topics, *American Dictators* is notable for the return of footage of Jones shouting in public, something missing from most of his post-2002 films.

(ASTRO)TURF WARS (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Taki Oldham
Production Company: Larrkin Films

One's proximity to an issue can sometimes obscure the truth, therefore it often takes an outsider to see what's really happening. That's what happens in Australian Taki Oldham's dissection of American politics, *(Astro)Turf Wars*. Oldham exposes the unseen forces behind the radical Tea Party Movement, something unknown to both its supporters and detractors. *(Astro)Turf Wars* uncovers a conspiracy by the wealthy elite to guide the course of political discussion for their own interest, using unwitting citizens as pawns.

"Astroturfing" is when a political party or corporation creates a fake grass roots movement, one where they set the tone of the discussion to benefit their interests. Such groups are typically given evocative names like "the Coalition to Protect Patients' Rights" or "Americans for Prosperity" and go to great lengths to hide their corporate benefactors. Oldham goes undercover as a Tea Partier to ascertain which forces are at work behind the movement. Through some investigative work, Oldham discovers that the groups backing the Tea Party are wealthy lobbyists who honed their craft lobbying for tobacco interests in the eighties and nineties. Almost tragically, *(Astro)Turf Wars* presents the rank and file of the Tea Party as being in the dark about the fact that they are being manipulated by these corporate interests. Furthermore, *(Astro)Turf Wars* shows that those pulling the strings disdain those they are deceiving.

(Astro)Turf Wars is an excellently researched investigation that has surprisingly slipped under the radar for the most part. Oldham's case against the Astroturfing groups is airtight; it is impossible to imagine a viewer not being swayed by the overwhelming amount of information presented in the film. To his credit, Oldham keeps the film from being overly biased towards one political party or another, perhaps another benefit of his "outsider" status. Though he focuses exclusively on conservative groups, Oldham is careful not to demonize the Republican Party for the actions of some of its supporters. Ultimately, those engaging in Astroturfing are shown not to be motivated by political ideology, but simply by greed.

(Astro)Turf Wars was oddly prescient in its warnings about Astroturf-

Astroturfing in the climate change debate. (Astro)Turf Wars.

ing backers the Koch brothers. In 2011, they were revealed to be the driving force behind controversial anti-union legislation in Wisconsin.

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE (1993)

Filmmaker/Director: Tim Tate
Production Company: Yorkshire Television/The Discovery Channel

Conspiracy of Silence is as famous for the details of its suppression as it is for the information it contains. British-based Yorkshire Television journeyed to Franklin, Nebraska, to follow the efforts of attorney John DeCamp's investigation into an alleged child prostitution ring. The completed documentary was slated to be aired on America's The Discovery Channel in 1994, but the network pulled the show shortly before airtime. Conspiracy theorists claim that the show wasn't aired because of threats to the network directly from the United States government, but it has made its way out into the public anyway, becoming one of the most popular bootlegged tapes in the Conspiracy Cinema world.

Conspiracy of Silence is a look at former Republican fundraiser Lawrence D King. Convicted of embezzlement, King was accused of far worse by investigators who claimed they found evidence that King was operating a child prostitution ring out of Boys Town, the Catholic orphanage immortalized in the 1938 Spencer Tracy film of the same name. These explosive claims rocked Nebraska as it implicated not only King, but many other prominent politicians and business leaders.

A 1990 grand jury dismissed all charges, however, calling the allegations made by the victims "a carefully-crafted hoax" and charging two of them with perjury.

Conspiracy of Silence's tale only begins there, however, because it is at this point that John DeCamp begins reaching out to the alleged victims and doing a more thorough investigation into their charges. Many aspects of the Franklin case would raise a red flag in the conspiracy theorist's mind, none perhaps more so than the fact that the lead investigator was killed in a plane crash just days before the grand jury released their findings. This struck DeCamp as too convenient as well, and solidified his belief that there were forces outside of Nebraska working to make this case disappear. *Conspiracy of Silence* details the difficulties DeCamp has at getting at the truth, particularly the unreliability of the now-adult victims.

If the claims of government suppression are true, the problematic portions of the documentary are likely its final minutes. DeCamp visits Washington, DC to investigate a potential connection between the Franklin scandal and a June 29, 1989 *Washington Times* front page story about underage "call boys" visiting the Reagan-Bush White House. That initial story was never followed up, and DeCamp believes that there is a link between the ring run by Lawrence King and stories of prostitution in DC. Though it goes unmentioned in the film, both stories are not far removed from the accusations of New World Order/Illuminati theorists, and the claims of *TranceFormation of America* author Cathy O'Brien.

Conspiracy of Silence would ultimately prove to be an ironic title for the documentary, which has never officially been released. The work print is readily available on several websites, however, as are the complete, unedited interviews DeCamp performed with the victims. The information presented in *Conspiracy of Silence* is shocking, and the story of its suppression only lends greater credence to its claims. It is a legendary piece of Conspiracy Cinema and is, to date, the only film on this topic.

THE FALL OF AMERICA AND THE WESTERN WORLD: A SURVIVAL GUIDE (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Brian Kraft

Production Company: None listed

Fall of America and the Western World*'s conspiracy theory homework.*

A ten DVD, nearly nine hour collection of presentations from conspiracy theorists, political pundits, financial experts, religious scholars, and survivalists. This exhaustive collection is marketed with slogans like "Get it NOW! Before it's banned!" and "It could save your life" and is structured like an educational film for the conspiracy novice. The film even breaks between segments to give the audience topics to research on their own and each disc ends with a "required reading list."

Educational goals aside, *The Fall of America and the Western World* presents an extremely conservative Christian take on the state of the world and includes a "true definition of the Antichrist," to quote the packaging. This viewpoint may discourage some viewers from watching as it certainly colors the information in the film and how it is presented. The entirety of chapter eight is devoted to Biblical eschatology, particularly how events like 9-11 and the financial collapse can be seen as prophetic. Thus, the film sees the New World Order as a foregone conclusion and unavoidable, so the viewer must prepare themselves accordingly. To that end, the collection comes packaged with a survival guide with helpful tips for living off the land and "off the grid."

The presentations included in the film are exceptional, however, and not necessarily made from the same conservative viewpoint as the film itself. Kraft has gathered a who's who of Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers and theorists: Alex Jones, David Icke, and G Edward Griffin. Others in the film aren't necessarily conspiracists by definition, but have made several appearances in other films. Notable among these are NYU professor Mark Crispin Miller and vegan blogger and author Mickey Z. Regardless of his motives for the film, Kraft should be commended for assembling such a diverse and informative group.

The Fall of America and the Western World will be too long for most

viewers by five or more hours, but those that endure all of it will be well rewarded with good, thoughtfully presented information. One must take into account the film's biases before watching, however. *The Fall of America and the Western World* is a decidedly American and Eurocentric take on world events. Those looking for a more global perspective—or even the perspective of someone who isn't Caucasian—will need to look elsewhere.

PSYWAR (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Scott Noble
Production Company: Metanoia

Psywar is a look at psyops, which is typically defined as actions by the government to influence popular opinion for their benefit. In short, propaganda. The makers of *Psywar* set out to prove that psyops have been used by the American government against its citizens since the days of World War I and continue into the present day with increasing intensity. The goals of these campaigns are often facilitated by the public relations industry, a group that *Psywar* identifies as nothing short of being government propagandists.

Psywar begins with a look at the oft-repeated footage of Iraqis toppling the statue of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Much less reported was the revelation that US forces, not Iraqi citizens, were the ones pulling down the statue. For the film, this isn't simply a dearth of good reporting but a calculated psyop involving the military and the media working in collusion. The film also states that the rescue of Jessica Lynch was staged as a PR event used to provide a cover for increased bombings in Baghdad, and to give the war a young, smiling spokeswoman that Americans could love.

After establishing that propaganda is being used by the American government against its citizens, *Psywar* begins to trace the history of the phenomenon of "PR" back to its inception. The first "spin" is seen as John D Rockefeller's handing out of pennies to children to distract from his harsh crackdowns on unionizing workers. The scheme was designed by Ivy Lee, one of the fathers of public relations, who also convinced Rockefeller to donate to universities in order to sanitize his public image. *Psywar* presents public relations as a field that often finds itself at odds with public opinion and morality, and is as guilty as those whose

crimes it attempts to whitewash. In particular, *Psywar* points out that one of the most respected PR firms, Burson-Marsteller, has such notorious clients as Blackwater, the tobacco industry, and several Third World dictators.

Psywar concludes with advice on how to remove oneself from the "managed" reality of public relations and propaganda. Overall, the film is very strong, and presents new interviews with several theorists, most notable of which is Noam Chomsky. *Psywar* qualifies as Conspiracy Cinema through its use of footage appropriated from other sources without permission and by virtue of the fact that it will scare most viewers to death. It is an illuminating look at the shadowy world of information management that, like the best of Conspiracy Cinema, will have you questioning the very reality of the world around you.

VOTERGATE: THE MOVIE (2004)

Filmmaker/Director: Russell Michaels & Simon Ardizzone
Production Company: The Votergate Project

The majority of Americans might not realize it, but they interact with a Diebold product on a daily basis. Among the company's products are automated teller machines (ATMs) and home and business security and alarm systems. Diebold's smallest business unit is its most controversial: electronic voting machines. In 2004, nearly a quarter of Americans used an electronic voting machine to cast their ballot, the overwhelming majority of which were manufactured by Diebold. Diebold maintains that their machines are, for all intents and purposes, perfect, and that using them prevented "hanging chad" controversies that marred the 2000 election. Others, such as the makers of *Votergate: the Movie*, feel otherwise.

In its opening minutes, *Votergate* claims that Diebold machines are very much fallible. The film cites three cases in particular where Diebold machines were at fault: over 2,500 votes in a California primary were counted for the wrong candidate in 2004, 16,000 votes for Gore were uncounted in 2000, and, the most glaring, 140,000 votes were counted in an Indiana county with a population of under 20,000. Through interviews with activists, politicians, and Diebold representatives, *Votergate* explores how even the slightest mistake can be catastrophic for democracy.

The main issue in *Votergate* isn't simply that errors could occur, but that "errors" could be intentionally manufactured. One of the film's presenters demonstrates to 2004 Democratic Presidential candidate Howard Dean that one need only have access to a single computer to change the voting results for a county or even an entire state. *Votergate* presents a step-by-step guide to "hacking" the election results, a process that only requires a moderate amount of computer know-how.

The conspiracy in *Votergate* lies in both the push to use electronic voting machines and in the ease with which elections can be changed. To find the culprits, one need look no farther than the winners of said elections. The makers of the film present the results of every election conducted with Diebold equipment as questionable at best, but most likely intentionally manipulated. *Votergate* does not have any evidence to support its claims of vote tampering but does make a strong case to reexamine the use of voting machines. The filmmaker's position that even a single error is a blow to democracy is one that will ring true with most viewers, no matter whether their candidates won or lost in 2004.

Politics Continued: the American Presidents

Although conspiracism exists in every culture, Americans are particularly enamored with it and thus tend to be the largest producers of Conspiracy Cinema. Depending on the theorist's viewpoint, the President is either the victim or the architect of the direst conspiracies and, for that reason, Presidents factor heavily into the canon of Conspiracy Cinema.

The following films are dedicated to conspiracies about a particular President that did not fit more readily into another section of this book and films on more notable events from their presidencies appear in their own respective chapters.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 16TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

MANY FILMS MAKE REFERENCE TO A CONSPIRACY THEORY IN THE DEATH OF President Lincoln, but I was only able to identify two films solely dedicated to the conspiracy, both from mainstream cinema.

REVIEWS

THE LINCOLN CONSPIRACY (1977)

Filmmaker/Director: James L Conway
Production Company: Sunn Classic Pictures

FOR THE AVERAGE FILM OR TELEVISION VIEWER, SUNN CLASSIC PICTURES IS best known for introducing the world to *Grizzly Adams*, the loveable mountain-man and his ursine pal, Ben. To more discerning cinephiles, Sunn Classic Pictures is more fondly remembered for a series of documentaries they released over the course of the seventies that investigated far more intriguing topics, such as the paranormal and life after death. Films like *The Amazing World of Psychic Phenomena*, *In Search of Noah's Ark*, and *The Bermuda Triangle* were box office successes for the low-budget filmmakers, and almost of all their documentaries are considered to be cult classics today.

In 1977, Sunn Classic Pictures released *The Lincoln Conspiracy*, based on the book of the same name by Balsiger and Sellier. *The Lincoln Conspiracy* is a historical docu-drama that challenges the official version of the Lincoln assassination. The film doesn't challenge the idea that John Wilkes Booth assassinated Lincoln, but rather the series of events leading up to that and immediately following.

Per the film, Booth's hatred of the President was well-known in Washington, as he had unsuccessfully tried to murder or kidnap Lincoln several times before the end of the Civil War. Instead of attempting to stop Booth, congressmen, cabinet members, and the military joined forces to ensure his success. It was an example of politics making for strange bedfellows: Booth hated Lincoln for what he had done to the South, the political figures hated him for being too lenient on them.

After Booth assassinated Lincoln, his backers became those hunt-

Booth makes his move: The Lincoln Conspiracy.

ing him the most doggedly, afraid that he might implicate them if captured. *The Lincoln Conspiracy* also believes a conspiracy was at work in Booth's "death," claiming that it was another man killed in the barn, not Booth. Satisfied that he would flee the country if he believed he had gotten away with it, Booth's backers in Washington covered up the fact that he was still alive, arranging for fake testimony and witnesses to condemn his "co-conspirators."

The Lincoln Conspiracy is an early example of Conspiracy Cinema and a surprisingly well-made film to boot. Sunn Classic Pictures' narrative films were exclusively children's features, but they did an excellent job with the more mature fare here. There are only a handful of Conspiracy Cinema films on the topic of the Lincoln assassination, making *The Lincoln Conspiracy* an especially rare treat.

As of this writing, *The Lincoln Conspiracy* is unavailable on DVD. VHS copies routinely sell for over $100 on Amazon.com and eBay.com.

THE MAN IN THE BARN (1937)

Filmmaker/Director: Jacques Tourneur
Production Company: MGM

Before cementing his legacy in horror cinema with *Cat People* and *I Walked with a Zombie*, French director Jacques Tourneur made a series of shorts for MGM. Among these is 1937's *The Man in the Barn*, the earliest example of Conspiracy Cinema I was able to identify. The eleven minute film begins with the 1903 suicide of David E George, who with his dying breath shockingly admits, "I killed the greatest man who ever lived."

Man in the Barn: *the real Booth?*

George's friends dismiss his statements as dementia, but the presiding physician points out the numerous physical similarities between George and John Wilkes Booth. Others remark how George seemed to be receiving a mysterious regular income from some unknown party. *The Man in the Barn* then revisits that fateful night, and the subsequent inability of anyone to successfully identify the body retrieved as belonging to Booth. *The Man in the Barn* doesn't simply stop at hypothesizing that Booth may have survived the barn fire, but blatantly states that he most likely had help from someone in authority in Washington. By pointing out that the telegraph lines in and out of Washington were mysteriously down immediately after the assassination, *The Man in the Barn* isn't simply the "historical mystery" its title card bills it as, but a true piece of Conspiracy Cinema.

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON, 42ND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The presidency of Bill Clinton was a milestone for Conspiracy Cinema. Three unrelated events caused the genre to explode from a few films a year at the start of his term in office, to several films a month by the time he left office. The first was the rise of the internet and the proliferation of conspiracism through message boards and websites. Secondly, increased affordability of video cameras, home computers, and editing equipment made amateur film production an attainable goal for aspiring Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers. Perhaps most important to the

proliferation of Conspiracy Cinema during the Clinton presidency was the so-called "vast right wing conspiracy." Clinton was the target of an unprecedented number of personal attacks during his term in office, both from the media and the "alternative media" of Conspiracy Cinema.

REVIEWS

CLINTON'S ANGELS (1998)

Filmmaker/Director: Waleed & Malik Ali
Production Company: MPI Films

A rarely seen documentary on Clinton's love affairs. *Clinton's Angels* falls into the realm of Conspiracy Cinema by virtue of its presentation. The stories of Gennifer Flowers, Paula Jones, and Monica Lewinsky are told from a decidedly conspiratorial perspective, alleging that Clinton used his power to cover up his misdeeds. The film does a poor job of maintaining the guise of impartiality or an air of maturity, and never misses an opportunity to edit in a shot of the Washington Monument, at one point superimposing it over the White House for the few viewers who didn't get the joke the first time.

THE CLINTON CHRONICLES (1994)

THE NEW CLINTON CHRONICLES (1996)

Filmmaker/Director: Patrick Matrisciana
Production Company: Citizens for Honest Government/Jeremiah Films

In January 1998, First Lady Hillary Clinton referred to the allegations against her husband Bill as being orchestrated by "a vast right-wing conspiracy." The phrase immediately became one of the hottest political stories in America, with the future Senator and Secretary of State alternately sympathized with and accused of paranoia by her supporters, and the phrase turned into a badge of honor for Republicans. There are conflicting reports about whether or not the Republican party was actually engaged in a "conspiracy" to malign Clinton, but there can be little doubt that the Citizens for Honest Government and Jeremiah Films were attempting to do just that, albeit very publicly.

Jeremiah Films has released no fewer than six Conspiracy Cinema films on the Clintons, some as recently as 2008. Their most well-known film, *The Clinton Chronicles*, is primarily a collection of footage cannibalized from their other titles, but remains a landmark of Conspiracy Cinema for the amount of mainstream media attention it garnered.

The Clinton Chronicles and its addendum, *The New Clinton Chronicles*, base the majority of their claims about Bill Clinton on statements made by Larry Nichols. Nichols first ran afoul of Clinton while he was still the Governor of Arkansas when he sued Clinton for misusing state funds for trips to see his girlfriends. Nichols was later named the chief "Clinton Crazy" in a 1997 *New York Times* article on Clinton conspiracies and *The Clinton Chronicles*. Nichols has played a role in almost every allegation made against Clinton, both mainstream and conspiratorial, and *The Clinton Chronicles* marked his first exposure to a national audience.

Nichols' inside information on Bill Clinton was gained during his time at the Arkansas Development Finance Authority, an organization which Nichols states is a front for everything ranging from political kickbacks to money laundering. Specifically, Nichols states that Clinton, along with several other wealthy and influential Arkansans, was involved in the importation of South American cocaine through a CIA-run airstrip in Mena, Arkansas. The profits from the narcotics trafficking were then given to the ADFA, which in turn would distribute them as political bribes in the form of grants to business ventures. Claims of drug trafficking through Mena are not unique to *The Clinton Chronicles* (or to Citizens for Honest Government's two other films on the topic) but the claims of money laundering are Nichols' own. He is his own source for this information and therefore the theory's credibility is directly tied to Nichols', which does not work in the film's favor given that Nichols was having ongoing legal issues during the time of its release. That in itself does not discredit him; however, his assertion that there is a conspiracy aimed directly at him will make him appear unduly paranoid in the eyes of most viewers.

The Clinton Chronicles doesn't simply place Bill Clinton at the center of the cocaine trade in Arkansas, but also depicts him as a full-blown coke fiend, in addition to his more well-known problems with fidelity. For these allegations, the film brings in several others who claim to have seen Clinton involved in unscrupulous behavior, including former Arkansas State Troopers and Paula Jones. Each presents Clinton as hav-

ing affairs on an almost daily basis and Jones gives the complete story of her allegations against Clinton. Nichols returns to share two more Clinton factoids: first stating that the ADFA funded his jaunts to see women, and then accusing every female member of Clinton's administration of having gotten their jobs through affairs with him.

The "new" portion of *The New Clinton Chronicles* is a mixture of self-promotion and damage control, but offers nothing in the way of new information. The film takes full credit for the Republican victories in the 1994 mid-term elections, discounting almost all other political and social influences on their outcome. The majority of the new footage is dedicated to giving updates on the participants of the original *Clinton Chronicles* film. Several of those who appeared lost their jobs or had legal problems, but the most extraordinary claim comes from Larry Nichols' attorney, who states he was beaten and left for dead.

Though for several years it was the most widely known example of Conspiracy Cinema, *The Clinton Chronicles* is an anomaly in the genre. It uses the term "conspiracy" in its original sense; that of a criminal conspiracy. There are no grand schemes of world domination here, and, even at its worst, the film accuses Clinton of nothing more than misdemeanor drug use and being a bad husband. It is very evident that the film was made for viewers outside the conspiracy community, as any conspiracy theorist watching the film will immediately wonder why it doesn't mention Waco or the Oklahoma City bombing. In the absence of any New World Order or Illuminati theorizing, *The Clinton Chronicles* feels more like tabloid journalism than conspiracy theory.

The film is never very persuasive, likely because it never tries to be. One gets the feeling that its intended audience is already predisposed to disliking Clinton, and anyone who does not share this view will be put off by the frequent mean-spirited attacks with which the film engages. Keep in mind that many Conspiracy Cinema films have labeled Bill Clinton everything from a satanist to an evil alien, but the fact remains that even these accusations seem less vitriolic than ones directed at him by Larry Nichols. The vast majority of Conspiracy Cinema has not been as muckraking as *The Clinton Chronicles*, yet the unprecedented media attention given to this film has influenced popular opinion about not only conspiracy documentaries, but also about the people that watch them.

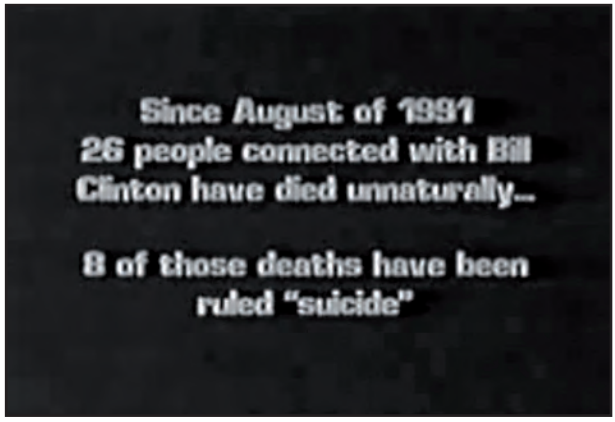
THE DEATH OF VINCE FOSTER: WHAT REALLY HAPPENED? (1995)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited (likely Patrick Matrisciana)
Production Company: Citizens for Honest Government/Jeremiah Films

The Death of Vince Foster wastes little time making its allegiances known. Within the first five minutes it declares then-President Bill Clinton to be a criminal in such a matter-of-fact manner that it is clear the filmmakers' agenda is less about persuasion than it is about strengthening the beliefs the audience already have. Indeed, the Citizens for Honest Government's films (discussed elsewhere in this chapter) seem aimed directly at those predisposed to dislike President Clinton, so rare is it that they dedicate any significant time to proving some of the more libelous statements made in them. This, like the other films, is peppered with accusations of criminal and immoral behavior, even when such statements are not germane to the topic at hand.

This is one of their more entertaining films, however, and the majority of *The Death of Vince Foster* presents itself as a murder mystery rather than an indictment of Clinton. Deputy White House Council and longtime Clinton friend Vincent "Vince" Foster was found dead from a single gunshot wound to the head on July 20, 1993, in a park outside Washington, DC. Found alone with a .38 caliber revolver nearby, Foster's death was immediately ruled suicide. The strongly anti-Clinton Citizens for Honest Government expectedly believed that a cover-up was involved, and *The Death of Vince Foster: What Really Happened?* offers a wealth of evidence supporting their claims that is compelling, even when viewed in light of their bias.

Through a mix of onscreen interviews, news footage, and text from official reports, the film lays out twelve inconsistencies which they feel point to murder rather than suicide. The film takes great pains to avoid conjecture here, sticking only to facts that can be proven by either credible news reports, the autopsy results, or the official police findings. These "inconsistencies" are subdivided into three groups: those that prove the crime scene was tampered with before authorities arrived, those that prove Foster did not shoot himself, and those that prove the involvement of others in his death. I will spare you the entirety of the list but the most intriguing facts involve the gun, which was found in the right hand of the left-handed Foster but which did not have his


Since August of 1991
26 people connected with Bill
Clinton have died unnaturally...
8 of those deaths have been
ruled "suicide"

The "Clinton Death List" that appears in all of Citizens for Honest Government's films.

fingerprints on it. Instead of having theorists comment on these facts, the film very wisely gives the commentary over to Gene Wheaton, a retired US Army Criminal Investigator who investigated the Foster suicide. Wheaton lends an air of believability to the proceedings and bases his observations on his experiences rather than his desire to unearth a conspiracy.

There are two more sections of *The Death of Vince Foster*, each of which is less convincing than the one preceding it. Part Two deals with cover-ups but only manages to prove the existence of ineptitude on the part of Washington, DC and Virginia law enforcement. Part Three delves into pure speculation and hypothesizes about the contents of Foster's office and what was removed during an alleged "raid" by White House officials to cover their tracks. The film concludes with the infamous "Clinton Death List," a list of all the mysterious deaths involving Bill and Hillary Clinton.

Had *The Death of Vince Foster* dedicated itself solely to the murder mystery angle, it would rank among the most exciting and engrossing films in the Conspiracy Cinema canon. As it stands, the filmmakers are so committed to their desire to link Foster's death directly to Bill Clinton that they are forced to engage in speculation, undercutting the facts they previously presented. Viewers will likely be convinced of foul play by the end of the film's first half only to watch as the film slowly chisels away at its own credibility in the second, replacing intrigue and mystery with name-calling and specious claims. Despite its problems, *The Death of Vince Foster* contains a large amount of well-researched information, and is the only Conspiracy Cinema film dedicated exclu-

sively to this topic. The film is invaluable for this reason, but curious viewers should bear in mind that it only addresses one of the dozens of conspiracy theories surrounding Foster's death.

NONE DARE CALL IT MURDER (1996)

Filmmaker/Director: Anthony J Hilder
Production Company: Free World Film Works

Anthony Hilder may not bring any new information to the table in his Clinton Conspiracy Cinema film *None Dare Call it Murder*, but, without a doubt, it is by far the most entertaining of the films made about the infamous "Clinton body count." After all, it features Hilder himself, who barely waits until the one minute mark before making the statement: "The body count around Bill and Hillary Clinton is climbing faster than a fat monkey in a swamp full of starving alligators." This bizarre yet vividly descriptive metaphor is but the first of many, each of which gets progressively more amusing until one completely forgets that Hilder is only rehashing information we've heard before.

There is, however, a method to Hilder's madness and it is undeniable that he commands the viewer's attention like no other Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker. Granted, it is easy to dismiss Hilder's presentation as mere theatrics, but it's still impossible to look away. Furthermore, if I'm being honest, the case that *None Dare Call it Murder* presents is strong, and Hilder bases his claims not on supposition but on interviews with former Clinton staffers and mainstream journalists.

None Dare Call it Murder tackles all the major Clinton conspiracies: drug smuggling through Mena, love affairs, Vince Foster's suicide, the siege at Waco, and the Oklahoma City bombing. When not providing the audience with memorable sound bites, Hilder is a deftly skilled interviewer, getting intriguing interviews from decidedly uncharismatic subjects, many of whom appear to be nervous about being on camera. Also to Hilder's credit as a filmmaker, *None Dare Call it Murder* covers a vast amount of information at a quick pace with a surprising thoroughness. The film ends as strangely as it begins, this time with a rock/rap hybrid song featuring Hilder on vocals.

OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE: THE MENA CONNECTION (1996)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited (likely Patrick Matrisciana)
Production Company: Integrity Films

Obstruction of Justice begins as a murder mystery. In the autumn of 1987, two Arkansas teens were struck by a freight train while lying on the tracks. The engineers stated that despite the frantic blowing of the horn and the loud screeching of the brakes, both boys remained motionless even as the inevitable bore down on them. Though the deaths were out of the ordinary for the tiny town, the official cause of death was ruled an accident involving the teens smoking marijuana and falling asleep on the tracks. Linda Ives, the mother of one of the teens, would not accept the ruling and began her own research and a legal battle against the Arkansas political machine.

The scenario put forth by Ives is one of conspiracies and cover-ups. She believes the boys were witnesses to a "drug drop," where bundles of cocaine are dropped from passing airplanes to couriers below. *Obstruction of Justice* states that they saw evidence of Barry Seal's CIA-financed illegal drug operation headquartered in Mena, Arkansas, and that the Arkansas State Troopers who oversaw the drug drops killed them to keep them quiet. The involvement of Mena and the Arkansas State Troopers suggests heavily that then-governor Bill Clinton would have been aware of the boys' deaths, and it is intimated that he was in fact the orchestrator of the cover-up.

Suggest is all the film can do about its most grandiose claims, but *Obstruction of Justice* does successfully prove some of the smaller instances of malfeasance. Particularly damning is the material on Arkansas coroner Fahmy Malak. Either Malak was intentionally attempting to obstruct justice or criminally incompetent; regardless, the fact that Bill Clinton protected him from prosecution and even rewarded him is strong evidence of corruption and cronyism in the Arkansas government. The other issues discussed in *Obstruction of Justice* aren't exactly "proved" by the film since they are already part of the official record. Dan Harmon, special investigator for the case, has been brought up on numerous felony charges, making his decisions in the official investigation suspect.

Obstruction of Justice's opening credits list the production company

as Integrity Films but do not list a filmmaker. I would say with some degree of certainty that Patrick Matrisciana and Citizens for Honest Government/Jeremiah Films were involved with the production, however. *Obstruction of Justice* has a very similar style to films like *The Clinton Chronicles* and several of the interview subjects here appear in that film as well. *Obstruction of Justice* tones down the anti-Clinton rhetoric significantly and presents its mystery well, making it perhaps a more compelling film than its companions.

BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II, 44TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The gap between Bill Clinton and Barack Obama should not be interpreted to mean that George W Bush had an easier time with conspiracy theorists, but rather that Mr Bush was implicated in so many large conspiracies that those films appear in other chapters.

Conspiracy cinema on Barack Obama is one of the fastest growing categories of the genre, with new films being released at the rate of approximately one per month. Much as with Bill Clinton, many of these films are coming from outside the world of conspiracism, sometimes with significantly larger budgets. These films are still Conspiracy Cinema in spirit, despite the fact their filmmakers likely don't consider them as such.

REVIEWS

FALL OF THE REPUBLIC VOLUME ONE: THE PRESIDENCY OF BARACK OBAMA (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

After eight years and as many films criticizing the Bush administration, Alex Jones wasted little time in turning his attention to Barack Obama. In his defense, this wasn't done simply out of routine. Anyone familiar with Jones' work would have immediately recognized that Obama's policies would draw Jones' ire for the exact same reasons that

Bush's had. *Fall of the Republic Volume One* sees Jones taking a more subdued approach to his filmmaking but continuing to expose the same ongoing conspiracies he identified in his first Conspiracy Cinema films more than a decade earlier.

I call Jones' style for this film more subdued because it appears as if he is stepping back from the spotlight a great deal more in comparison to his previous works. He narrates *Fall of the Republic*, but does not dominate the film, only occasionally appearing as a commentator and the other commentators get equal—and in some cases, more—screen time. This may be due to the fact that over half the film deals with financial matters and he wisely leaves analysis of these issues to more knowledgeable theorists. Furthermore, the bulk of *Fall of the Republic* doesn't deal with conspiracy theory at all, but rather differing opinions on Obama's fiscal policies. When the film moves on to other issues, Jones continues to shy away from his standard topics of the New World Order and the Illuminati, but instead keeps things very similar to a political debate.

At the film's midpoint, the Jones we've grown accustomed to resurfaces, presenting evidence that Obama is simply a new frontman for the globalist New World Order agenda. He never unleashes one of his patented rants, however, instead continuing to take the calm approach even as the film begins to veer farther from the mainstream towards the conspiratorial. Jones describes how many of Obama's key policy plans fit into the New World Order agenda but waits until the very end of the film to address things like FEMA concentration camps and depopulation efforts.

Conspiracists have a wide variety of opinions about Alex Jones but, regardless of their assessment of his message, his media savvy is undeniable. *Fall of the Republic* is a departure for Jones but an intentional one. Jones' relentless criticism of the Bush administration made him and his theories *persona non grata* among conservatives. *Fall of the Republic* is his attempt to present himself anew to this audience, using the same arguments but in the context of a democratic President, one about which they were inclined to believe the worst. For this new audience, Jones reinvents himself as a political commentator who shares their beliefs rather than the conspiracy theorist who has been claiming for eight years that their beloved President Bush orchestrated 9-11. It is an incredibly shrewd move on Jones' part and one that shows why he is the leading

Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker. His grasp of the power of the medium and how to use it effectively not only surpasses that of his Conspiracy Cinema peers, but even that of mainstream documentary filmmakers.

MEDIA MALPRACTICE (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: John Ziegler
Production Company: Right Reel Films

Media Malpractice takes the mainstream media to task for several issues, but the most recurring topic in the film is their handling of Barack Obama. The film presents evidence that the media handed Obama the presidency at an early stage in the race, ignored a serious investigation of his qualifications, and unfairly attacked his opponents. Even Obama supporters may have to concede the point that he received perhaps the most favorable treatment of any presidential candidate in recent memory, but some of the other arguments made by *Media Malpractice* prove to be more contentious.

Media Malpractice doesn't simply feel that Obama was treated with kid gloves by the press, but that the Republican candidates—specifically Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin—were unfairly attacked. *Media Malpractice* is as much about Palin as it is Obama, and has several interviews with her where she talks about the emotional distress the barrage of attacks caused her and her family. Even though the film is dedicated to attacking the "liberal media," it also spends a fair amount of time discussing the treatment Hillary Clinton received after Obama became her competitor for the nomination. *Media Malpractice* holds up the scrutiny that Clinton received as an example of the media functioning properly, and this is juxtaposed against Obama's treatment to highlight the relatively easy time the latter received.

Ziegler makes several well-argued points about the unprecedented treatment Barack Obama received on his path to the White House. Most people, however, will be unable to see past the Palin apologists to appreciate this. Unfortunately for *Media Malpractice*, its attempt to combine these two issues causes its strongest points to be overshadowed. Ultimately it devotes too much time to Palin to be effective as a serious investigation into Obama's campaign.

OBAMA, CLONING, AND THE COMING SPACE WAR: THE BARACKHENATEN PRESENTATION (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Freeman
Production Company: The Freeman Perspective

Internet and radio theorist Freeman is one of the most unique thinkers working in conspiracy and metaphysical studies today, and therefore this filmed lecture/presentation of his deserves inclusion in this work. Freeman's work is dedicated to analysis of symbols and events as well as predictions, the latter of which he's "a bit flaky with" by his own admission. He claims in the lecture that he predicted that George W Bush would be "the last American President," something he now believes has come true due to Obama's inability to adequately prove he was born in the United States.

No, Freeman isn't a Birther (those who question Barack Obama's US citizenship; see a question of eligibility), but something far more intriguing. He believes that Barack Obama—as well as his wife and daughters—are clones of ancient Egyptian royalty, specifically, Obama is a clone of Akhenaton. Akhenaton attempted to introduce monotheism to Egypt through worship of Aten, the Sun God, who Freeman identifies as Lucifer. *The Coming Space War* of the title is a reference to Apophis, a near-Earth asteroid Freeman claims to be a giant space weapon under New World Order/Illuminati control. Apophis is the Greek name of Aten's nemesis, bringing the prediction full circle and tying Obama to the coming space war.

It isn't exactly clear what all of this means, however, as Freeman's talk is interesting but often without focus. Obama being a cloned pharaoh is certainly the most exotic claim made about the President, and Freeman is a likeable and an enthusiastic enough presenter to hold your attention, if not convince you. The most entertaining part of the lecture occurs when Freeman plays the Obama slogan "Yes we can!" backwards to reveal that it says "Thank you, Satan."

THE OBAMA DECEPTION: THE MASK COMES OFF (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Jones' second film on Barack Obama is very much like his first in

Pharaoh Obama? Obama, Cloning, and the Coming Space War.

regards to the arguments he makes. *The Obama Deception* is infinitely more entertaining, however, as it sees *Fall of the Republic*'s depiction of Jones as a calm political pundit replaced with the crusading firebrand of his previous films. *The Obama Deception* is a riskier film, taking time away from its main subject for discussions of the Bilderberg Group and the North American Union, venerable conspiracy chestnuts that may strike less seasoned viewers as paranoid. What distinguishes Jones from other Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers is that he encourages political action over passive paranoia, and *The Obama Deception* is his clearest call to action yet.

In reality, *The Obama Deception* does not spend very much time on Barack Obama himself. The overwhelming majority of the film is dedicated to exposing those entities and individuals working behind the scenes, those really in power. An unlikely interview with rap legend KRS-ONE yields an apt metaphor for the concept at work in the film. KRS-ONE compares Obama to the manager of a fast food restaurant, having only a limited amount of power and ultimately the employee of the franchise owners, a group invisible to the public. This is the same conclusion Jones arrives at: that Obama is merely the figurehead of the same ruling class (the New World Order) that has been in power for decades.

To prove his point, Jones explores the structure of world government starting with the Bilderberg Group, who he states Obama met while still on the campaign trail. Analysis is done on the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations as well, and Jones lists the members of Obama's administration that have memberships in each.

The Obama Deception *presents the real power structure in America.*

The film is framed by a discussion of the financial crisis which Jones sees as an elaborate New World Order plot to grab more power.

The Obama Deception is one of the better films from Jones' recent output. It has a relatively short running time (under two hours) for a Conspiracy Cinema film, meaning that there isn't enough time for any of the film's points to become belabored. *The Obama Deception* distinguishes itself from other films on Obama by including interviews with African-Americans, a rare occurrence save for appearances by Obama critic and perennial Republican presidential candidate Alan Keyes. The inclusion of popular figures like KRS-ONE and Public Enemy's Professor Griff not only allows Jones to avoid the appearance of being racially one-sided, but also allows a group woefully underrepresented in Conspiracy Cinema to voice their opinions.

A QUESTION OF ELIGIBILITY (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Joseph Farah
Production Company: WND Films

The hunt for Barack Obama's long-form birth certificate continues in *A Question of Eligibility*. Released by the ultra-conservative and often conspiratorial *WorldNetDaily* website (wnd.com), the film is a succinct look at the views of the group that has come to be known as the Birthers. Birthers are people who believe that Obama is not a natural born American citizen as specified by the Constitution and, therefore, is not eligible to be President. For the Birthers, Obama's entire political life is a conspiracy, one in which the shadowy "powers that be"

Logic in the Birther film, A Question of Eligibility.

have allowed an ineligible politician to hold office for the express purpose of ruining America.

A Question of Eligibility is a filmic summary of the efforts of WND and those associated with them to expose Obama's presidential ineligibility. The proof, in their eyes, is his administration's inability to produce a long-form birth certificate, which contains information about the child's parents, the doctor performing the delivery, and the location of the birth. Obama has provided his short-form birth certificate, also known as a Certificate of Live Birth, which is available online. The Birther position is that since Hawaii was granted statehood shortly before Obama's birth, any infant, regardless of place of birth, would easily have been able to receive a Certificate of Live Birth, thus only the long-form will satisfy them.

The lengths to which they are willing to go are quite impressive. One Birther even travelled to Kenya to obtain an affidavit from Obama's grandmother swearing that he was born there. The only other proof of Obama being born outside the United States comes in the form of Fox News clips questioning his heritage. It is here that the filmmakers tip their hand and reveal themselves to not truly be part of the conspiracy community, as no self-respecting conspiracy theorist would ever claim that a mainstream media outlet was telling the truth. None of the people appearing in *A Question of Eligibility* would likely consider themselves to be a "conspiracy theorist" either. In their minds, they're dealing with facts, not theories.

There is an undeniably conspiratorial bent to this film, however, and

even if they would disagree with being labeled theorists, the participants identify themselves as victims of an ongoing conspiracy. Non-Birther viewers will likely take away little from *A Question of Eligibility* save more questions. Such as: What do the Birthers expect to happen if it is revealed that Obama is ineligible? In all likelihood, Vice President Joe Biden will assume the presidency, and there would be little change from the Obama administration policies they so despise. And the more pertinent question: Why do they assume Obama is deceitful enough to lie about where he was born, yet not deceitful enough to simply produce a fake birth certificate? Neither question is answered, but *A Question of Eligibility* does a good job of explaining the main tenets of the Birther beliefs in a film that is well-made and relatively brief.

ROTHSCHILD'S CHOICE: BARACK OBAMA AND THE HIDDEN CABAL BEHIND THE PLOT TO MURDER AMERICA (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Texe Marrs
Production Company: Power of Prophecy

One's first encounter with the work of Texe Marrs can be quite a shocking experience. The smiling, kind-looking pastor is an authority on Biblical prophecy and all things conspiratorial, with a focus on how the two intersect, and he has written dozens of conspiracy books on secret societies. Marrs' other favorite topic is exposing what he sees as an ongoing Jewish conspiracy for world domination. In Mr Marrs' opinion, Judaism is the source of occultism, Freemasonry, satanism, communism, and practically every other ill afflicting the world today. It would be easy and perhaps appropriate to lump Marrs in with other anti-Semites, but he strongly maintains that he has nothing against Jewish people despite the fact his particular conspiracy narratives invariably have Jewish people at their center.

What does this have to do with Barack Obama? Marrs identifies Obama as being handpicked by Lord Jacob Rothschild, head of the Rothschild family of international bankers, to oversee the destruction of America and to introduce the New World Order. Rothschild is Jewish, a fact Marrs points out first during a digression attributing both the fixing of the 1919 baseball World Series and the JFK assassination to the Jewish mafia. He begins his look at Barack Obama with a surprisingly well reasoned argument about the socialist leanings of peo-

ple Obama has admitted influenced his political beliefs. This section is brief, however, before the film resumes listing every Jewish member of the Obama administration by name. Those even tangentially associated with Obama who are not Jewish are labeled "commie pinkos," such as rock group the Decembrists who performed before an Obama campaign speech.

Unlike most Conspiracy Cinema films about Obama, *Rothschild's Choice* is not in the Birther camp. Marrs fully believes that Obama was born in the United States, but that his actual father was sixties activist and poet Frank Marshall Davis. Marrs goes on to state that Obama is something of a "Manchurian Candidate," groomed from birth to eventually be President and to turn the United States into a communist country. Marrs assumes his audience is already well-versed in the evils attributed to the Rothschild family, so to identify Obama as their "choice" is a damning accusation.

Rothschild's Choice presents Obama's presidency as simply a continuation of a centuries old conspiracy. Others have made Conspiracy Cinema films about the Rothschild family that aren't presented as tactlessly as Marrs', however, so it becomes impossible to ignore his obsession with their race. He does himself no favors by punctuating every sentence with an overly emphasized "JEW," which, when coupled with images of White House staffers, can only be taken as anti-Semitism. Ultimately, the only proof of a conspiracy that *Rothschild's Choice* offers is that Obama knows some Jewish people. Perhaps that is enough for Mr Marrs, but won't be sufficient for anyone else.

Conspiracies in Religion, Spirituality, and Secret Societies

This section contains theories involving beliefs, be they religious, occult, or simply clandestine. Appearances will be made by religious conspiracism's "big three": the Freemasons, the Catholic Church, and the Jews. The latter pair is represented more in this work than the Free-

masons due to the surprisingly small number of films that deal with that group alone.

Since there are thousands of films made on these topics, I have only included examples where a conspiracy was mentioned overtly. For that reason, those films dedicated to simply pointing out doctrinal differences have been omitted.

REVIEWS

AUSCHWITZ: THE DAVID COLE VIDEO (1992)

Filmmaker/Director: David Cole & Bradley Smith
Production Company: None listed

Holocaust denier David Cole visits the Auschwitz memorial under the guise of a Holocaust believer to interview Dr Franciszek Piper, senior curator. *Auschwitz*, as it is sometimes called, is an important film for "revisionists," as they call themselves, because Cole is Jewish. Cole starts his arguments against the Holocaust before the film proper begins, erroneously claiming in the opening crawl that there is still a controversy about its existence and flat-out lying by stating that there was not a gas chamber at Dachau. Cole is engaging in one of the more insidious techniques shared by both Holocaust deniers and Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers—implying there is doubt where none exists and comparing dissimilar events. Even if Cole's claim that Dachau did not have a gas chamber were true—which it isn't—that fact has no bearing on what took place at Auschwitz.

Cole, who appears to be no more than fifteen in the film, narrates his tour through Auschwitz, stating that his guide can offer no proof of gas chambers existing. He doesn't let us hear them speak, however, except when what they say could be misconstrued for his benefit. As the film continues it becomes clear that no one at the Auschwitz site can give Cole the answers he's looking for, and one begins to wonder what proof, if any, would satisfy him. When confronted with evidence of gas chambers, Cole quickly dismisses it as a "Soviet put-on," but never states what the motivation would be for the Soviet Union to fake the Holocaust.

Some websites where the video can be viewed state that Cole had to go into hiding after the release of the video and was never heard

Pastor Peter J Peters: DC Street Sorcery.

from again. That isn't true: Cole resurfaced in 1998 after he sent a notarized, handwritten letter to the Jewish Defense League expressing his belief in the official version of the Holocaust and saying that he regretted what he had done. In the letter, Cole did the job of reviewing this film for me, referring to it as "videotaped garbage filled with self-hatred and pseudo-intellectual nonsense."

DC STREET SORCERY (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Pastor Peter J Peters
Production Company: The LaPorte Church of Christ

> What do the Great Pyramid, a golden rectangle, the Kabalistic Tree of Life, the five Platonic solids, Stonehenge, the rhythm of Venus, a hexagram, a heptagon, and witchcraft have in common? Our nation's capital!

Thus begins *DC Street Sorcery*, a look at the occult and Freemasonic symbolism in the architecture and geography of Washington, DC. The filmmakers find a seemingly endless number of pentagrams and hexagons in DC, and make a convincing case that many of the unique designs and statues found in the city were chosen for reasons other than aesthetics. The symbolism found ranges from the blatant—the Washington Monument being an Egyptian obelisk—to those that take considerably more faith to believe in—Rhode Island Avenue being an imaginary line drawn through Stonehenge.

DC Street Sorcery presents one of the most thoroughly researched

analyses of DC geography in the Conspiracy Cinema canon. Only about a half hour of its 280 minute running time is dedicated to this analysis, however. The rest of the film consists of Bible lessons and sermonizing by Pastor Peter J Peters of the LaPorte Church of Christ. Most of his talk is still conspiratorial in nature, as Peters states the majority of works on conspiracy theories are designed to hide the true "conspirator of conspirators," Satan. Peters also claims that most Judeo-Christian churches are actually dedicated to satanism, and actively try to keep their members away from Biblical truths—the same truths he now shares with the audience.

Those who stick with the film to its conclusion are treated to the hilarious honky-tonk/gospel song Satan, Bow Down, played over the end credits.

THE HIDDEN DIMENSION IN WORLD AFFAIRS (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Jordan Maxwell
Production Company: Jordan Maxwell

The Hidden Dimension in World Affairs is nothing more than a narrated slideshow presentation, but it is important for a discussion of Conspiracy Cinema because Maxwell is an influential speaker and author. The presentation begins with a discussion of fascism that appears to be directed towards the American government post-9-11, but that is never explicitly stated by Maxwell. He soon gets to the point of his discussion, however, by linking fascism directly to the Catholic Church, citing the shared Roman imagery used by both groups as proof. Maxwell goes on to state that the Vatican is responsible for the rise of fascism in Europe and is behind the rise of "new Fascists" in the form of the Bush administration. He refers to the United States government as being "slaves to the Pope," and concludes the presentation with a warning to Christians who use the Iron Cross as a decoration.

Maxwell is a well respected expert on secret societies but he keeps most of *The Hidden Dimension in World Affairs* no deeper than surface level. Rather than citing some ancient text or esoteric writing, he's most often quoting from Wikipedia with the page on screen while he reads from it. Maxwell's presentation is extremely slow paced so it won't appeal to many outside his existing followers. Other films espouse identical theories in much more succinct and watchable formats.

Texe Marrs takes issue with a Catholic magazine in Is the Pope Catholic?

IS THE POPE CATHOLIC? (1999)

Filmmaker/Director: Texe Marrs
Production Company: Power of Prophecy

Unlike most Catholic Conspiracy Cinema films, Texe Marrs' *Is the Pope Catholic?* has no problems with the Church's beliefs, nor does he accuse them of being the architects of any conspiracies. *Is the Pope Catholic?*'s only target is Pope John Paul II, about whom the titular question is being asked. Marrs takes issue with John Paul II's acceptance of the faiths of others as evidence that he is a key figure in bringing about an evil New World Order with a polytheistic world religion.

In addition to its pun title, *Is the Pope Catholic?* features several examples of Marrs' amusingly glib tone and penchant for sardonic commentary. When a picture of John Paul II blessing a small child is shown, Marrs reminds the viewer that Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin were also frequently photographed with children. Equating the Pope with some of history's most nefarious villains may sound horrible to you, but Marrs delivers the line like a joke, a bit of black humor at which you may find yourself guiltily chuckling.

Marrs presents John Paul II as an usurper of the Papal throne and quite possibly the Antichrist himself, something he claims that Pope Paul VI had attempted to warn the public about before his untimely death. According to *Is the Pope Catholic?*, the beloved John Paul II's popularity is this conspiracy at work and the Pope's efforts to unite the faiths of the world is just a smoke screen used to hide an Illuminati

takeover. As usual, Marrs offers no solution on how to stop this conspiracy, instead presenting a world view where the bad guys have already won. This film, like his others, is only meant to serve as a warning, not a call to action.

JAY-Z EXPOSED (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: TheIndustryExposed.com

Rap music has become rife with conspiracy theorizing in recent years, and dozens of DVDs, YouTube videos, and websites are dedicated to exposing which rap artists are members of secret societies. Any major name has been both linked to the Illuminati *et al* and identified as working against them, and the heroes and villains of the industry vary from theorist to theorist. Not helping the confusion is the fact that a surprisingly large number of rap songs make explicit references to the Illuminati, the New World Order, and other conspiratorial topics. The crossover between rap and conspiracy theory flows both ways, as you'd be hard pressed to find a modern Conspiracy Cinema film that does not contain at least one rap song.

The one thing the diverse rap conspiracy theorists agree on is that Jay-Z figures prominently in the picture somehow. *Jay-Z Exposed* is one of several similarly titled films (*Exposed: Jay-Z* and *Jay-Z Exposed as a Master Mason* are different works) that seek to prove that the millionaire rapper is a member of a nefarious group attempting to take over the world. Jay-Z's patented diamond hand sign is highlighted at different points of the film as representing the Illuminati all-seeing-eye and the Masonic square and compass, and it is the latter group in which the film places him. Close-ups of Jay-Z giving Masonic handshakes to fellow musicians like Kanye West and Coldplay's Chris Martin are shown and in-depth analyses of several of his songs and videos are given.

The main theory in *Jay-Z Exposed* revolves around a shirt worn by the rapper in a promotional video for his album, *The Blueprint 3*. The shirt in question is emblazoned with the words "Do What Thou Wilt," which knowledgeable theorists will immediately recognize as the motto of occultist Aleister Crowley, who is routinely connected to the Illuminati and the Freemasons. Most often, *Jay-Z Exposed* simply places rap music under the same scrutiny given to rock music for years. At

(Possibly) Masonic rapper Jay-Z. Jay-Z Exposed.

one point, Jay-Z's songs are even shown to have backwards-masked satanic messages such as "murder murder Jesus 666" and "Catholics, I gotta murder them."

Jay-Z Exposed is notable for being part of the first wave of Conspiracy Cinema films on the topic of rap music. It is very rough around the edges but the information presented in the film is intriguing and unique. There is very little concrete information to be had, but, honestly, the film makes just as strong a case for Jay-Z being a Freemason as other films have made about any recent President. Additionally, it is one of the few such films made by an African-American, a group underrepresented in the Conspiracy Cinema world. Judging by the ever-increasing popularity of conspiracy theories in the rap community, it is likely that *Jay-Z Exposed* will be the first of many.

THE JEWISH CONSPIRACY (year unknown, c. 2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Mark Ferrell
Production Company: Nightmare Historical Videos

Inexplicably, *The Jewish Conspiracy* begins with Keith Mansfield's Funky Fanfare, best known as the "coming attractions" bumper music from low-budget seventies films. The title cards shown while the song is playing inform the viewer that the film will reveal "the Jewish plans for the future of our planet," and that all the information presented comes straight from the Jews themselves. The on screen text following the intro is a litany of horrific quotes about exterminating gentiles attributed to Jews, so why Ferrell chose to begin his film with Mansfield's

jazzy, up-beat tune is anyone's guess. The fact that Funky Fanfare shows up dozens of times in the film is even more bizarre.

No sooner than seven minutes in and *The Jewish Conspiracy* breaks its promise of only including information from Jews by featuring a snippet from a David Irving lecture. Knowledgeable viewers will be easily able to spot the film's bias at this point, that is, if they haven't already. Irving is listed as "Britain's most prominent historian": a contentious claim considering he's most widely known for being a Holocaust denier. *The Jewish Conspiracy* contains the same fallacies as Ferrell's other films—specifically, he takes the biased historical record as being completely accurate. He isn't above making dramatic revisions of his own, however, recasting the Biblical account of Exodus as the Jews being expelled from Egypt, rather than escaping from slavery.

Over the course of its near three hour running time, *The Jewish Conspiracy* discusses all the most popular anti-Semitic topics. Long portions of the film are dedicated to familiar discussions of Jewish control of the media and Holocaust denial, and lesser-known theories are mentioned, such as Jewish backing of the gay rights movement, and, puzzlingly, Ferrell even blames Jews for illegal immigration. As the film progresses, Jews are blamed for even more macabre crimes, such as ritual murders and white slavery, evidence for the latter being presented by former Klansman, Nazi, and political candidate David Duke.

It is difficult to imagine anyone but the most ardent anti-Semite being convinced by the claims made by *The Jewish Conspiracy*, most of which are presented without even the smallest amount of corroborating evidence. It is even more impossible to entertain the idea of anyone being able to stay with the film for 200 minutes. *The Jewish Conspiracy*'s intro states that it will give the reasons "why people hate the Jews." Since the film offers no conclusive proof of any kind, one is left to assume there is no reason.

JEWISH RITUAL MURDER REVISITED (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Mark Ferrell
Production Company: Nightmare Historical Videos

This "exposé" of what it claims to be an ongoing practice begins with a bizarre segment much different than the remainder of the film. A quasi-slasher film—complete with digitally added film grain for add-

Blood matzo: Jewish Ritual Murder Revisited.

ed authenticity—features an offensive Jewish stereotype in a false nose stalking and killing a woman in a forest, then draining and drinking her blood. A text crawl then explains to the audience that "truth is stranger than fiction" and the rest of *Jewish Ritual Murder Revisited* is dedicated to proving that the opening segment is, in fact, an accurate depiction of the acts of an extreme sect of Judaism.

Most Conspiracy Cinema films are predicated on some type of disbelief, be it disbelief of accepted history or disbelief of the "official version" of an event. *Jewish Ritual Murder Revisited* takes the opposite approach, however, unquestioningly believing every historical example of blood libel. Over the course of its eighty minute running time, it examines dozens of examples of "proof" of Jewish ritual murder, ranging from the Middle Ages to the modern day, citing Middle Eastern tabloids as a source proving that the practice continues. The film is decidedly anti-Semitic and logically untenable in its assertion that the historical record is always correct and unbiased. The film begins by citing the adage "truth is stranger than fiction," but the filmmakers would be better served by another: "don't believe everything that you read."

The film ends with a return visit from the Jewish slasher of the intro, this time making matzo ball soup with human blood. This time, however, the actor can barely hide his laugher, robbing the scene of the impact it was intended to have. Also of note: This film is one of the few of its type available on Amazon.com, where it can be found under the gentrified title *Ritual Murder Revisited*. The product description has also been scrubbed of any hint of the film's true nature.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE BIG LIE (2011)

Filmmaker/Director: Eric Hunt
Production Company: HolocaustDenier.com

Eric Hunt has made one of the most structurally interesting Holocaust denial films in his *The Last Days of the Big Lie*. It is a scene-by-scene deconstruction of the Steven Spielberg-produced Academy Award winning documentary *The Last Days*. Hunt narrates over *The Last Days*' footage, questioning the statements made by those interviewed, in particular *The Fifth Diamond* author Irene Zisblatt. Zisblatt has been a frequent target of Holocaust deniers, who claim that her story is embellished and therefore false. All of the interviewees in *The Last Days* are discussed as being frauds, but by far the most time and ire is dedicated to Zisblatt.

While Hunt's film is structurally interesting, it presents nothing new in the way of technique for the Holocaust denial film. All of the "facts" in the film come from other Holocaust denial sources, sources that dismiss any evidence of the Holocaust as a fabrication. *The Last Days of the Big Lie* is predicated on an even larger fallacy, however. Even if those interviewed in *The Last Days* are exaggerating or lying outright, that fact in and of itself would not disprove the Holocaust.

THE LIGHTBRINGERS: THE EMISSARIES OF JAHBULON (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Juri Lina
Production Company: Referant Film

The Lightbringers presents a history of the ubiquitous Freemasons, and their relationship with fellow secret societies the Knights Templar and the Priory of Sion is explained. The suppressed Knights Templar founded Scottish Rite Freemasonry, and Grand Masters of the Scottish Rite gained access to the ultra-exclusive Priory of Sion, the holders of the true arcane knowledge. It isn't merely a coincidence that this early portion of *The Lightbringers* sounds like the plot of a Dan Brown novel—both works are pulling their information from the same sources.

The Lightbringers gives an accurate history of Freemasonry in a travelogue format, showing all the important European lodges and American historical sites associated with the order. Unfortunately for most

viewers this information won't be new; almost everything "revealed" in the film can be found in any number of books on Freemasonry or online. Furthermore, this information entered the pop culture lexicon after the success of *The Da Vinci Code* and similar titles, and there are several televised programs that cover this same information to an even greater depth.

Only in its final minutes does *The Lightbringers* present its conspiracy. Per the film, the Freemasons have gained control of the governments of the United States, Great Britain, France, and the United Nations in their bid for global domination. *The Lightbringers* name this plan the New World Order, and since the film attributes the United Nations to a Freemasonic plot, one must assume that their scheme is close to fruition. All is not hopeless, however. Director Lina concludes the film on a positive note, stating that just before the Freemasons solidify their grasp over the world they will be destroyed from within. How he knows this is unclear, but *The Lightbringers* is one of the only New World Order films to have a happy ending.

THE ORDER OF DEATH (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Jones' follow up to *Dark Secrets Inside Bohemian Grove* is an anomaly for the director. Though it may seem to be paradoxical, Jones is one of the more rational figures in conspiracism. His films and theories always deal with real world events, facts, and figures. He may not be able to prove everything he claims, but, at a minimum, Jones' theories are reasonable to the degree that the scenarios he presents are possible. You will never see one of Jones' Conspiracy Cinema films attribute something to UFOs, alien technology, supernatural power, angels, or demons, and the exotic touches found in the theories of others are completely absent from his work.

The Order of Death contains many of these otherworldly trappings that Jones' other films lack. A literal sequel to *Dark Secrets*, *Order of Death* investigates the occult practices of world political leaders. Among the elite, Jones identifies memberships in secret societies, beliefs in ancient mystery religions and astrology, and frequent use of the ever-popular "devil's horns" hand signals. The hidden camera foot-

age from *Dark Secrets* is revisited frequently and is presented in much higher quality than before. The term "order of death" is used here as a catch-all term for a host of secret societies, but is applied most strongly to the Freemasons, to whom the majority of the film's closing moments are dedicated.

Jones did not completely abandon his secularism, however. A large portion of the film shows local Californian groups protesting outside Bohemian Grove. Many of these protestors perform rituals against the Grovers, and Jones' commentary makes clear his feelings on any type of occultism. Jones stops short of openly ridiculing the protestors, instead opting for the more diplomatic approach of depicting them as simply misguided.

Order of Death is notable for being Jones' only foray into the world of the supernatural. Bush and John Kerry's membership in Skull & Bones is referenced in other films, but only here is the group shown as being part of some Freemasonic hierarchy of secret societies. Because he is out of his element, Jones seems less enthusiastic about the material than in his other work. Compared to the rampaging firebrand of *Dark Secrets*, he appears almost comatose. Interesting for fans of Jones, but if you're looking for hard information on the occult dimension in conspiracy theories, you'd be better served with a theorist more accustomed to the topic.

THE OTHER ISRAEL: THE WHOLE STORY OF THE ZIONIST CONSPIRACY (year unknown)

Filmmaker/Director: Lynne Pike & Ted Pike
Production Company: National Prayer Network

The makers of *The Other Israel* appear to want to have it both ways. Frequently they pause the film's message to warn the viewer against being anti-Semitic, advising that true Christians (the film is made by the National Prayer Network) love their Jewish brethren. However, the message that they return to is one of the most complete condemnations of Judaism on film, even taking into account those films made by admittedly racist and anti-Semitic groups.

Presenter Ted Pike visits the library of a synagogue in the film's opening moments, and claims that all of the information he'll present in the film comes from an encyclopedia of Judaism he found there. Af-

ter a brief section on Jewish history, Pike begins to describe how pedophilia was not only tolerated but encouraged by early Jews, but stresses that this practice doesn't continue in the modern day. Pike does this "bait-and-switch" several more times, graphically describing some act that would be offensive to viewers from any background before briefly adding that modern Jews are innocent of any wrongdoing.

Pike doesn't backtrack on some of his assertions, however. He states that Jews are behind Communism, the Illuminati, World War II, and currently control all of the world's media. This is followed by yet another request for the audience not to be anti-Semitic but, by this stage in the film, the point is moot as anyone who isn't an anti-Semite would have likely already stopped viewing the film. *The Other Israel* concludes with a cataloging segment listing the other films and books offered by the National Prayer Network, almost all of which deal with the same topics as this film.

SKULL & BONES: THE CATHOLIC CONNECTION (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Anthony J Hilder
Production Company: Free World Film Works

Hilder begins *Skull & Bones: the Catholic Connection* with a literal bang: audio from a Torontonian Catholic radio host advocating dropping an atomic bomb on Iran is played over images of mushroom clouds and explosions. The relevance of this footage won't be immediately evident to the viewer, but to expedite that, Hilder quickly jumps into the meat of his presentation without any of his trademark wordplay. The film consists of an interview with William David Cox, a former Catholic seminarian and author dedicated to exposing the ills in the modern Catholic Church. Cox's argument is that the size and organizational structure of the Church facilitates the spread of evil, as reformation of a group so large would be nearly impossible. Furthermore, Cox states that those who do attempt to bring issues to light are suppressed.

The early portion of their interview is framed by footage from the 2006 National Catholic Prayer Breakfast and Hilder has selected clips from the event that strengthen his case. Particularly helpful is a segment wherein a speaker refers to George W Bush as "the second Catholic President... maybe the first!" More than simply disrespectful to the memory of John Kennedy, this offhand remark forms the basis of

Hilder and Cox's theories that the Catholic Church has a relationship with many secret societies, including Bush's Skull & Bones. In doing so, *The Catholic Connection* places the Church as part of Hilder's "evilarchy" attempting to destroy the world.

The Catholic Church isn't the only religious group singled out in *Skull & Bones: the Catholic Connection*. Hilder and Cox take to task any American religious leader who has advocated war or supported the wars of the Bush administration, be they Catholic or Protestant. The film is particularly concerned with religious leaders that have been dubbed "Judas goats," those who have compromised their spiritual principles and are actively working for the New World Order. Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, John Hagee, Jack Van Impe, and other televised preachers are called out for their war-mongering, and Hilder places them in league with the Skull & Bones/Bush family "Brotherhood of Death."

Skull & Bones: the Catholic Connection is one of Hilder's most engrossing films and covers far more topics than its title implies. Hilder and Cox dissect the Iraq War, the Bush administration's policies on torture, 9-11 and more over the course of the film, and never does the discussion become dull. The film concludes with a tantalizing "to be continued..." and I for one would like to see Hilder continue to work in this more serious style. Some viewers may miss his clever turns of phrase, but these often distracted from his skills as an interviewer, which are prominently displayed here.

THE SOUL TRAVELERS (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Michael Wynn
Production Company: HollywoodInsiders.net

This over five hour look at the history of the occult begins with a long text crawl that accurately sums up the mindset of the Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker and even the conspiracy theorist. It is a message to the sceptic and the debunker, the viewers for whom "proof" is the most important aspect of a work. Wynn states,

> "I have to see it to believe it" is the sort of thing usually uttered by the fool whose head is filled to the brim with countless things he considers "truth" but was never there to witness. Does this fool question World War II as an actual event?

A salient point, but one that lets the viewer know that the several hours of material that follow are primarily speculation.

Speculation or not, *The Soul Travelers* will hold the viewer's attention for the entirety of its five hours. Wynn discusses literally every facet of mythology, religion, and occultism during his presentation and he keeps things moving at a pace quick enough to hold interest but not so fast as to lose coherence. Just when you think *The Soul Travelers* is all ancient history, Wynn moves on to more exciting topics, like the symbolism of Freemasonic rituals. Things get a little weird around the four hour mark with an extended discussion about vampires' lives and feeding habits. Wynn not only claims that the bloodsuckers are real, but states that he's received death threats from these vampires, who he calls "others." A small group of these "others" comprise the Illuminati and are guiding the world towards their ultimate goal of a New World Order.

Prior to *The Soul Travelers*, Wynn made the predictive programming and film symbolism series *Hollywood Insiders*. *The Soul Travelers* is a companion piece to those films, as it explains many of the more obscure references Wynn makes in them. Although five hours is a bit much to ask of the viewer, I found *The Soul Travelers* to be a well made and engaging film. Wynn's takes on the Illuminati and the New World Order are unique to say the least and offer an intriguingly different viewpoint on those conspiracies.

WHO INFILTRATED AMERICA? (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Thomas Richards
Production Company: SpirituallySmart.com

Who Infiltrated America? is a no-narration trip through Catholic and Jesuit conspiracy theories. As organ fugues play on the soundtrack, still photos and title cards guide the viewer through an alternate history of both groups, one that emphasizes misdeeds (the Inquisition, *etc*) and identifies the Catholic Church as the "whore of Babylon" of the Biblical Revelations. Many of the film's claims are historically accurate but presented in a biased manner, such as the Church's relationship with Hitler and Nazi party. While it is true that the Catholic Church did not openly condemn Hitler in his early career, any student of history should immediately recognize that prior to World War II no other group,

including the governments of the United States and Great Britain, did either. The logic used by the film is that a one world church and one world government (read: New World Order) are undoubtedly the same thing, and the remainder of *Who Infiltrated America?* is dedicated to placing Catholicism as the architect of every vast conspiracy.

Who Infiltrated America? makes a lot of claims about the Jesuits—referred to here as "Vatican Assassins"—but doesn't provide any proof of their involvement in conspiracies. Information is taken wildly out of context. For example, the film uses clips from JFK Conspiracy Cinema film *Dark Legacy* to substantiate the involvement of the Jesuits in the Kennedy assassination. Were the film to include a longer portion of *Dark Legacy*, it would be obvious that film doesn't even mention the Jesuits or Catholicism and places the blame for the assassination squarely on the shoulders of George HW Bush. Footage from several more Conspiracy Cinema films—including a handful from Alex Jones—is interspersed with anti-Catholic rhetoric to create a tenuous link between the two.

Most conspiracy theorists watching *Who Infiltrated America?* will be familiar enough with the clips shown to know that they are being used out of context and then likely dismiss the film's theories. Those who haven't seen these images before won't be convinced of the film's claims either since it doesn't attempt to prove them, just states them matter-of-factly. Ultimately, *Who Infiltrated America?* appears not to be interested in persuading viewers to its cause but remains satisfied to serve as a reaffirmation for those that already share its anti-Catholic sentiments.

UFOS, MASONRY AND SATANISM IN THE OCCULT SOCIAL ORDER (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Bill Schnoebelen
Production Company: With One Accord Ministries

Bill Schnoebelen is an interesting figure in both ufology and supernatural conspiracy circles. The soft spoken minister has written extensively on Christian history and counseling, as well as having written books on the doctrinal conflicts in cults. It is in the latter area that Schnoebelen's work takes an intriguing turn; when he talks about cults, he's speaking from experience. Schnoebelen spent sixteen years as an

occult priest, seven of which were in the Church of Satan, in addition to simultaneously being a Freemason and a Mormon, two groups that Schnoebelen says are one and the same. That's just the tip of the iceberg with Schnoebelen, who has been a UFO researcher since the early sixties and claims that werewolves and vampires are real. Schnoebelen also has intimate knowledge of the latter; his nine hour *Interview with an Ex-Vampire* details his life as a vampire.

Schnoebelen's contribution to Conspiracy Cinema is primarily filmed lectures and his *UFOs, Masonry and Satanism in the Occult Social Order* is the most interesting. Schnoebelen begins by giving a snippet of his biography, including the dozens of occult titles he's held as a member of the Wiccans, the Druids, the Spiritualists, and a myriad of other groups. The unifying thread between these diverse groups, per Schnoebelen, is UFOs and he details how all of his experiences in the occult involved aliens/flying saucers in some way.

The film delves into conspiracy during its discussion of the group tied to almost every conspiracy theory: the Freemasons. Schnoebelen states that the Freemasons worship non-Christian "elder gods," specifically the Elder Gods about which sci-fi author H P Lovecraft wrote. The entities are real, according to Schnoebelen, and Lovecraft's writings are part of the overall conspiracy these groups are engaged in to deceive the public. Schnoebelen believes that all "aliens" are actually demons/fallen angels and every secret society—the Freemasons, *et al*—are their servants.

Schnoebelen offers no more proof for any of this than simply his word. That isn't to say that he's intentionally being dishonest, but dishonesty is a claim made by some in the occult, UFO, and Christian communities. Whether or not his claims can be verified is beside the point, however, because his lectures are unique, intriguing, and always entertaining even if you consider them to be completely fictional.

The Police State: Intelligence Agencies, Law Enforcement, and the Surveillance State

Many theorists see the "police state" as the ultimate goal of the New World Order. Others simply see it as a disturbing trend in the Western world. Regardless of the viewpoint, Conspiracy Cinema about the police state is among the most impactful in the genre, since the topics discussed invariably affect the lives of the viewers in some way.

Reviews

AMERICAN DRUG WAR: THE LAST WHITE HOPE (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Kevin Booth

Production Company: Sacred Cow Productions

"Freeway" Ricky Ross was the most notorious cocaine and crack dealer in American history, and estimates put the total revenue of his drug business at nearly $600 million dollars. When apprehended, Ross originally received a life sentence. This was later commuted to just twenty years after investigative reporter Gary Webb discovered Ross' source: the CIA. Unbeknownst to Ross, he was a key player in the Iran-Contra scandal, distributing the cocaine received from the Nicaraguan Contras.

The bizarre story of Ricky Ross and its subsequent cover-up by the government serves as the central conspiracy theory presented in Kevin Booth's *American Drug War*. Booth posits that there is a drug problem in the United States because the government wants there to be one, and that the "War on Drugs" is simply a façade to funnel money into both law enforcement and the private prison industry. He has a diverse cast of characters on his side, a group ranging from Republican Congressman Ron Paul to stoner comedian Tommy Chong, and each ex-

Afghani heroin: American Drug War.

press their misgivings about the way drugs are treated in the United States. *American Drug War* goes a step farther and presents information that the government is still involved in the sale and distribution of drugs post-Iran-Contra, and theorizes an ulterior motive for the war in Afghanistan, coincidentally the world's largest producer of opiates. A second conspiracy is presented in *American Drug War*, one where the pharmaceutical industry has lobbied the government to criminalize drugs with potentially beneficial effects, such as marijuana. In summation, the main premise of Booth's film is that the War on Drugs has been a complete failure, perhaps intentionally so.

American Drug War is an incredibly powerful and well-made film. Booth has previously worked with Alex Jones on several Conspiracy Cinema films, but this film is a dramatic improvement over Jones' output. The arguments presented are well-reasoned but not so detached as to seem impersonal. Booth talks about his personal life at several points in the film and, rather than appearing as an appeal for sympathy, these moments will resonate with the viewer. More so than other Conspiracy Cinema films, *American Drug War* reminds the viewers that real conspiracies have victims. Highest recommendation possible.

Booth followed up *American Drug War* with *How Weed Won the West*, a film about marijuana laws and the medicinal marijuana movement.

AMERICAN POLICE STATE (2011)

Filmmaker/Director: Dan Bidondi & Richard Anatone
Production Company: Truth Radio

Subtitled "To Protect and Serve the New World Order," *American Police State* stays close to the theories presented by Alex Jones and other Conspiracy Cinema filmmakers. The advantage that *American Police State* has over similar films is the fact that it is one of the most recent films included in this book. Police state conspiracy theories are a rare example of a theory that is deeply dependant on current information. While there is still a large amount of historical information presented in the film, it is in tying more recent events to the theory that *American Police State* distinguishes itself.

A lot of the film is dedicated to the Travel Safety Administration's use of full body scanners and "pat-downs" as proof of a growing police state in the US. Other new information presented in the film is a discussion of the "Underwear Bomber" Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab and his possible connections to American intelligence. The film cites eyewitness reports that place Abdulmutallab in the presence of a well-dressed Caucasian "handler" prior to boarding the plane, leading the film to posit the event as a False Flag to serve as a pretext for more stringent security restrictions. Also mentioned in the film are decidedly twenty-first century takes on surveillance, such as mobile "scan vans" that can x-ray passersby and government-created smart phone apps to simplify the process of snitching on one's neighbors.

Bidondi and Anatone have done a great job of including sufficient evidence for their claims in the film, and rare is it they engage in speculation, challenging the viewer to research any statement they make for themselves. Much of *American Police State* is therefore a convincing take on the increased security measures in post-9-11 America. All viewers may not agree with their assumption that these measures are inherently bad, however, and if there is a flaw in the film's presentation it would be that it doesn't provide information that the government's searches and data collection efforts are being used for nefarious purposes. Since it is one of the first films to address 2010 and 2011, it will still be worthwhile viewing for most theorists.

AMERICA UNDER SIEGE (1994)

Filmmaker/Director: Linda D Thompson
Production Company: American Justice Federation

Linda Thompson followed up her two-part series on the siege at

Waco (*The Big Lie* and *The Big Lie Continues*) with *America Under Siege*, a look at the growing American police state. The film begins with a montage of Americana—buffalo, Yellowstone National Park, *etc*—shown to the strains of an unidentified but patriotic sounding tune. Thompson, our host, then breaks the happy mood with her introduction: "This is a beautiful country... or at least it was before it was taken over by murderers, liars, and thieves." Judging from the ear-to-ear smile on her face, Thompson appears to be pretty happy about this fact. She, of course, isn't, and the film begins a long journey exploring government abuses of authority.

First up are Randy Weaver and the massacre at Ruby Ridge, an important conspiratorial event that was all but forgotten after Waco. This is a common theme of all the examples presented in *America Under Siege*—practically all of them were abandoned for the higher profile events of Waco and Oklahoma City. It is therefore an intriguing time capsule of conspiracy theories circa 1994, a time when far fewer theorists were making Conspiracy Cinema films. Among these forgotten gems is a discussion of black helicopters used in both surveillance and harassment of citizens. In an intriguing segment, Thompson shows footage of her and her family being followed by one such black helicopter and by a man in a beige sedan that she claims was a government agent.

Another such piece of conspiracy lore discussed in *America Under Siege* are "tacmars." A popular theory that quickly fell out of vogue, tacmars are reflective markings on the backs of American road signs that are used as a secret code for the military and police. The shape, size, and position of the tacmars was allegedly used to guide those who could read them to military bases, hospitals, and other places of strategic importance. *America Under Siege* not only describes tacmars but provides several examples as Thompson follows the tacmar codes in various cities to see where they lead. Tacmars are included as part of the discussion on FEMA camps, and *America Under Siege* was one of the first Conspiracy Cinema films to present this theory.

America Under Siege will seem terribly dated to most viewers, but that's its main selling point. Many of the topics Thompson covers in the film were abandoned after Waco and then completely forgotten after 9-11. For those who were involved in conspiracy theory circles in the mid-nineties, the film will have an almost nostalgic quality to

it. Furthermore, a lot of the information Thompson presents is strong, especially since she relies primarily on her own camcorder footage as proof. An interesting film that is both superior to and less known than her Waco films.

ATROCITIES AT RUBY RIDGE (1995)

Filmmaker/Director: Kristina King
Production Company: KPOC TV

Kristina King's *Atrocities at Ruby Ridge* is one of the few Conspiracy Cinema films dedicated to Randy Weaver's standoff with federal agents in 1992. It really doesn't contain a conspiracy, *per se*, as everything King presents is simply her opinion about what happened during the siege and the reasons behind it. It does, however, conform very closely to the genre conventions of a Conspiracy Cinema film from the period, right down to the closing folk song that explains Weaver's fight against the "evil" federal agents.

Atrocities at Ruby Ridge begins with a verbose text crawl that makes the film's motives completely indecipherable:

> In a society struggling for strong leadership values and directions it is not surprising uncertain frustration and fear about the future provide a fertile breeding ground for those individuals seeking something to dispel the anxiety and anger which prevade [*sic*] modern day society. Fragmented families, deteriorating rapidly, changing social systems and violence portrayed in the main stream [*sic*] media all seem to contribute to the problem. Sometimes all that is needed under these conditions is a charismatic and persuasive individual with a commitment to do what he or she believes is the right thing to do for who ever [*sic*] is involved. You reach a point where you see things going on, or you are told things—and although they may go against your better judgement—but because you now start doubting your own judgement—you can see a conflict start to develop in your own mind. With the passage of time these head strong [*sic*] individuals often give up more and more of their involvement with society. Isolation ultimately leads to mind control, control of your own environment, and setting up doctrines that override ones [*sic*] individual needs. Your commitment is so great you become a "true believer" with a vision. That in-

> dividual then becomes the flame to the fuse often needed to start a chain of events which ultimately lead to what is called... ATROCITY AT RUBY RIDGE.

That's a fairly damning critique of Weaver: odd, given that the film that follows paints him as a true patriot and a victim of government abuses of power. What, if anything, the opening has to do with the matter at hand is not made clear and the remainder of *Atrocity at Ruby Ridge* thankfully avoids such attempts at armchair psychology.

CAMP FEMA: AMERICAN LOCKDOWN (2009)

CAMP FEMA 2: ENEMY OF THE STATE (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: William Lewis
Production Company: William Lewis Films

Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker William Lewis is not as widely known as some of his compatriots, despite having made several high quality films. This has more to do with Lewis as a person than a filmmaker. Unlike most filmmakers, Lewis doesn't appear in his films often, nor does he engage in any self-promotion. The film comes first for Lewis, something easily discernible by the production values of his work and its esteemed reputation in the conspiracy community. Two of his more recent films, *Camp FEMA 1* and *2*, are among the better works made on a topic that is a central part of many conspiracy theories: FEMA internment camps for American citizens.

To help establish in the viewer's mind that such a thing is even possible, Lewis begins *Camp FEMA: American Lockdown* with an investigation into the World War II internment camps established for Japanese-Americans. Most viewers will be surprised to learn about this underreported piece of history, and Lewis' use of it to establish a precedent for the conspiracy theory he espouses in the film is particularly inspired. *Camp FEMA* then goes on to describe the agency, their purpose, and that the scope of their authority is far broader than many realize. The film is careful to cite the specific laws and Executive Orders that grant FEMA this additional authority, a technique repeatedly used in Conspiracy Cinema and theorizing that both lends validity to the claim and allows the viewer to do their own research.

Camp FEMA presents a view of the organization similar to that of William Cooper and Alex Jones, but does so in a more mainstream manner than either. The film is designed to appeal to those both already familiar with the FEMA camp theories and newcomers alike, so rather than including discussions of the New World Order or Illuminati agenda, *Camp FEMA* sticks strictly to provable facts and the assumptions one could make from them. To use an example from the film, white supremacist Hal Turner courted a lot of controversy and like-minded supporters before it was revealed that he was actually working with the FBI. A mere blip on the radar of mainstream media, Lewis cites the incident here as proof that the government is actively keeping tabs on "fringe groups"—conspiracy theorists among them. The film then makes the supposition that this monitoring is a precursor to detainment of these groups in FEMA camps. The film concludes with a dramatization of a "thought crime arrest," an event it posits will be commonplace in the future, and finally a call for viewers to ignore the 2010 Census. The reason? Census data was used to identify the Japanese-Americans for placement in the camps.

Camp FEMA 2: Enemy of the State continues the themes begun in *American Lockdown* but places other current events in the same context. Highlighted here is the panic about the Swine Flu pandemic and potential social unrest due to the American financial crisis. Though the film still contains the details regarding the acts and laws pertinent to this theory, *Enemy of the State* often slips into speculation. One such digression identifies Wal-Mart as part of a mandatory vaccination conspiracy. An intriguing premise, but one for which the film can offer no proof.

Both *Camp FEMA* films are excellently made and engaging to watch. Lewis puts a lot of effort into making his films appear fact based rather than theory based, and this is certainly true for these films. The lack of a villain (the New World Order, the Illuminati, *etc*) makes the "why" of it all somewhat hard to swallow, however. It isn't that difficult to convince the audience that the government is up to no good, but convincing them that they are inherently evil is more difficult, without a theory as to their motivations.

COINTELPRO: THE FBI'S WAR ON BLACK AMERICA (1989)

Filmmaker/Director: Denis Mueller & Deb Evans
Production Company: Maljack Productions

Cointelpro is a shortened form of "counter intelligence program." The technique was used extensively by the FBI in the sixties and seventies against any group deemed "subversive." This included—but was by no means limited to—anti-war protestors, musicians, the Ku Klux Klan, and civil rights activists. It is with the latter that Denis Mueller and Deb Evans' *Cointelpro: the FBI's War on Black America* is concerned, and the film begins with a statement taken from the FBI detailing their objectives for this program. The primary objectives as outlined by the FBI included discrediting the Black Nationalist movement, particularly its leadership, and eroding public support for them in any way possible.

The bulk of *Cointelpro* takes a look at examples of the technique at work, often getting its information through interviews with members of the civil rights movement. The second point of the FBI Cointelpro goals was to prevent the rise of a "messiah," and the film shows the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X as being orchestrated by the FBI as part of this program. Infiltration of many groups is discussed and the Black Panthers are held up as an example of a group whose influence was managed and minimized through FBI involvement. *Cointelpro* also gives information showing that the FBI's infiltration of the KKK was used to different ends, including instances where the FBI aided and abetted the KKK in their campaigns against African-Americans.

Some of what is presented in *Cointelpro* has been admitted by the FBI. Much of it, however, is still denied by the agency. The conclusion of the film contains a lengthy interview and case study on jailed Black Panther Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt, who is presented as a political prisoner of the United States government. *Cointelpro* posits that Pratt was framed for murder by the FBI to eliminate him as a charismatic leader of the Panthers. The film's position on the matter—and Pratt himself—would later be vindicated in 1997 when Pratt was exonerated and paid $4.5 million in damages. A judge ruled that the prosecution's failure to disclose that the main witness against Pratt was working with the FBI unfairly biased the trial against him.

THE COLUMBINE CAUSE (2007)

Filmmaker/Director: Evan Long

Production Company: thecolumbinecause.tk

Redacted: The Columbine Cause.

Unlike most national tragedies, very few conspiracy theories appeared in the wake of the Columbine High School massacre. The official version of the story was easily provable from witness accounts and security camera footage, so there seemed to be no room to theorize an alternate version of events. Of the few theorists that did attempt to find a conspiracy at work, they most often focused on how the media covered the event, claiming that the crimes of two disaffected youths were being used to threaten the gun ownership rights of law abiding citizens. Even rarer were theorists who posited that the government itself orchestrated the massacre to usher in tighter gun control and more federal control over schools.

Theorist Evan Long falls closer to the latter category of theorists, but stops short of engaging in the type of speculation implied by that theory. Long's research and Conspiracy Cinema film *The Columbine Cause* are based solely on documented provable evidence, primarily pulled from the over 30,000 official police documents on Columbine hosted on his website. Long is one of the only theorists actively working on an investigation into Columbine and his *The Columbine Cause* is, to my knowledge, the only film dedicated exclusively to the topic. Additionally, it is also one of the most convincing Conspiracy Cinema films on any subject.

The Columbine Cause begins with audio from a 911 call detailing explosions in a Littleton park, a call seemingly unrelated to the Columbine

massacre. This call figures prominently in Long's theories, however, as do early televised interviews with eyewitnesses describing shooters not matching the appearances of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the sole planners and perpetrators in the official account of the event. The primary theory presented by *The Columbine Cause* is that parties other than Harris and Klebold took an active role in the events of that day, something evidenced by the 911 call used to begin the film: pipe bombs had been set off in a park so that the police would be on the opposite side of town when the shooting began. Long goes so far as to name two other prominent suspects based on his reviews of the police interviews with witnesses. Though any other party mentioned by the interviewees was redacted from the reports released, Long was able to use physical descriptions and interviews given to the media to identify Chris Morris and Robert Perry as working with Harris and Klebold on that day. Other individuals mentioned by witnesses but unable to be identified by Long have descriptive names such as "Camo Pants Gunman," "Blue Jeaned Bomber," and "The Rooftop Gunman," pulling these descriptions from eyewitness reports from students who vehemently claimed that the persons they saw were not Harris and Klebold.

Long points to possible military involvement in a discussion of one such unknown shooter, who he calls the "Chiseled Face Man." Chiseled Face Man was reported by some to be approximately thirty, well-built, and armed with a shotgun. Per Long, Eric Harris claimed to have been drugged at an Air Force Base his father worked at, a claim that some other theorists have used to imply that he and Klebold may have been victims of mind control. *The Columbine Cause* also questions the official reports that Harris and Klebold committed suicide through an investigation of the state their bodies were found in; Long's theory is that an unknown party is responsible.

Much of Long's film is investigative but he ventures into decidedly Conspiracy Cinema territory with his implication that the police and FBI ignored witnesses who deviated from the official version of events. The film's conclusion sees him veer more strongly into the realm of speculation with a digression regarding the possible Illuminati/occult significance of the Columbine massacre. Though a bit of a reach, this section does not take away from the excellent material presented earlier in the film. Even if you don't necessarily use the word "conspiracy" to describe it, *The Columbine Cause* makes an excellent case for a reinvestigation of

Marrs cautions viewers about FEMA camps: Gulag USA.

the event. Long has successfully armed the viewer with enough information from credible sources to question the official version. An excellent Conspiracy Cinema piece from Long, his first and only film.

GULAG USA: CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN AMERICA (2002)

Filmmaker/Director: Texe Marrs
Production Company: Power of Prophecy Films

Texe Marrs' take on the FEMA Camp conspiracy theory won't offer any new insight into specifics but it is one of the better explanations of why this theory has captured the minds of so many. *Gulag USA* frames the theory not as a new occurrence, but one as old as history. For Marrs, FEMA concentration camps are just another example of religious and social persecution that has existed for centuries, as evidenced by his likening it to the treatment of the Jews before and during World War II. Marrs expects Christians to be among those placed in the camps, so *Gulag USA* encompasses both the religious and conspiratorial sides of his ministry.

Unfortunately, much of the data Marrs presents to validate his claims is specious and often dated. Several times throughout the film he cites books or articles over a decade old, but it isn't the source that's problematic, it's how Marrs presents them. Whenever he cites a source, Marrs simply holds the book or magazine in front of the camera. The audience is only rarely allowed to see the information for themselves, making *Gulag USA* not only untrustworthy, but uncinematic as well.

POLICE STATE 2000 (1999)

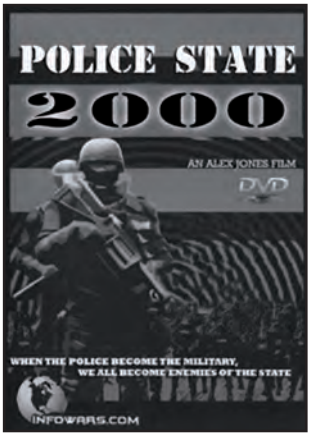
Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Alex Jones' first forays into Conspiracy Cinema are collections of vignettes about a particular theme, most often the increasing power of federal agencies and law enforcement. This is certainly true about *Police State 2000*, the first chapter of his (to date) four part series on abuses of authority by law enforcement. Like most of Jones' early films, *Police State 2000* feels overlong at times and is largely driven more by Jones' personality than hard information, but still contains some interesting information for Conspiracy Cinema fans.

Police State 2000 is particularly interesting when viewed in retrospect. To open the film, Jones makes a prediction that, in a few years, America would see the introduction of warrantless searches and wiretaps, and the public would be subjected to near constant surveillance. Viewing the film after the introductions of the USA Patriot Acts I and II, Jones seems eerily prescient here and the audience is likely to be more readily accepting of the remainder of the film. Such faith in Jones is perhaps unwarranted, because most of *Police State 2000* is filled with Jones ranting, raving, and putting himself before the message.

Jones spends a good chunk of time in the film discussing the rise of mandatory drunk driving checkpoints in his native Texas. Jones points out, perhaps correctly so, that such checkpoints are violations of the Bill of Rights' Fourth Amendment. Jones' argument has merit, but it seems unlikely that many viewers will want to admit it after he spends several minutes shouting insults at the police and likening them to the Nazi SS. Jones is engaging as much in gonzo journalism as he is conspiracy theorizing, and, most often, he appears to be trying to make the news rather than report it.

There is plenty of footage where Jones doesn't harass people and instead focuses on his warning about the coming police state. These scenes are significantly more effective than his confrontational ones but quickly become repetitive. One interesting aspect of this film is a discussion of the fabled "black helicopters," once such an important facet of conspiracy theory that they had their own Usenet group dedicated to discussing them. Black helicopters faded from conspiracy lore as quickly as they had entered it but, thankfully, the same was not to



be true about Jones, whose best work lay ahead of him.

POLICE STATE 2: THE TAKEOVER (2000)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Police State 2: the Takeover begins with Alex Jones succinctly summarizing the Conspiracy Cinema filmmaker ethos. He thanks his fans for duplicating and spreading his tapes and recognizes that it is his fan base, not him, that is primarily responsible for his popularity. It is a genuine moment in a genre that is too often about spectacle, and indicative of the more restrained approach Jones takes compared to this film's predecessor. Gone are the confrontations with unsuspecting officials and passersby, replaced with a focus on more verifiable theories.

Much of *Police State 2* deals with the protests during the World Trade Organization's 1999 conference in Seattle, Washington. Jones is particularly concerned with the treatment of protestors, many of whom were held in makeshift prisons staffed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, a group that at the time was only widely known in conspiracy circles. Jones presents footage of the protestors' First and Fourth Amendment rights being violated and further aligns himself with them by virtue of his shared anti-globalist beliefs. *Police State 2* identifies the WTO as simply an arm of the New World Order agenda designed to allow certain corporations to consolidate power.

Police State 2 really hits its stride in its investigation into the "black bloc" of protestors whose campaign of violence was responsible for the harsher crackdowns on peaceful protestors. Jones identifies the black bloc protestors as government-sponsored *agents provocateur*, and provides footage proving that the violent anarchists were treated with more leniency than peaceful protestors. In the years following *Police State 2*, mainstream media outlets outside the United States would arrive at a similar conclusion regarding black bloc protests in their own countries.

Police State 2 concludes with a look at CIA-sponsored drug smuggling and other New World Order related topics. The film's strength

remains in the Seattle material, however, which has Jones addressing topics outside the world of conspiracy theories for the first time on film. *Police State 2* is also a better paced and crafted film than *Police State 2000*, making it a far better entry point into the series than its predecessor.

POLICE STATE 3: TOTAL ENSLAVEMENT (2003)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

Alex Jones' Conspiracy Cinema films got progressively better after 9-11. *Police State 3: Total Enslavement* finds him at a crossroads between the amateurish style of his early work and the polished production style he would later adopt. The film begins with the same billowing American flag and excerpt from *Carmina Burana* that the previous entries in the series do: the first sign to the audience that if they enjoyed *Police State 1* and *2*, *3* is going to give them more of the same.

Jones starts things off by comparing those who don't believe in the New World Order as being like a "deer in headlights," transfixed by the proof staring them in the face but powerless to avoid getting hit. If one subscribes to Jones' theories, that grisly metaphor is an apt one, as he hyperactively bounces from topic to topic in the film, citing all as proof of growth of the New World Order. Though he is at his most animated here, *Police State 3* presents a subdued Jones and he spends most of the film parked behind a desk. Gone are the in-your-face interviews and on-site reporting of the earlier entries. This doesn't represent a change in Jones' style but rather proof of his success at spreading his message. By 2003 he was regularly appearing on mainstream television panel shows as a guest, and these appearances are used to fill the gap previously occupied by Jones' own reports.

Police State 3 presents the viewer with a wealth of proof for Jones' claims, making it one of the better researched films from his early work. It is, however, terribly dated and likely would have been even if viewed a mere six months after its completion. Up-to-date information is the lifeblood of this type of theorizing, and while *Police State 3* is an engaging film, even the most ardent of Jones' supporters will have little reason to watch the film now.

Patriotism and paranoia: Police State 3.

POLICE STATE 4: THE RISE OF FEMA (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Alex Jones
Production Company: Infowars

After a seven year hiatus, Jones returned to his *Police State* series with *The Rise of FEMA*. To use a cinematic term, *Police State 4* is a "reboot" of the franchise, a starting over. Made eleven years after the initial entry, Jones aims this film at the legions of new fans he gained in the intervening time rather than those who had been with him since the start. This technique is a bit of a double-edged sword. Though a more accomplished film in practically every regard, *Police State 4* effectively makes viewing the previous entries unnecessary. Viewers already familiar with those films may find much of 4 to be redundant.

In addition to summarizing the information shown in previous *Police State* films, 4 presents viewers with many contemporary examples. Jones makes much of Henry Paulson's comments to legislators that riots and martial law would be inevitable should they not pass the first financial "bailout package." Paulson's statement, which has been verified by several members of Congress, is shown as proof of the government's willingness to declare martial law and the fear those in power have of their citizens, a recurring theme in all of Jones' films. Jones states that the openness with which such things are now being discussed is proof that the total police state is not far off.

An amusing aspect of the film is Jones taking to task political conservatives for their attacks on Barack Obama. While he shares many of

the same criticisms, Jones (rightly) points out that these same pundits were silent when George W Bush implemented similar measures. Jones admits that he believes Obama to be "better" at being a front man for the New World Order than Bush was, and for that reason he considers him to be a bigger threat.

Police State 4 is notable because it is, to date, the best film Jones has released on this topic. The film is polished and quickly paced, making its near two and a half hour running time almost seem too brief. Jones is in his element here and his enthusiasm for the topic is infectious. To his credit, Jones doesn't abuse his charisma and, more often than not, he provides ample proof for the claims he makes. *Police State 4* is the most watchable of the series and serves as an excellent introduction to Jones.

Health and Environmental Conspiracies

There is a belief among conspiracy theorists that the "villains"—be they Illuminati, the New World Order, or simply the government—are actively attempting to damage the health of both their citizens and the planet. This is often seen as a program of depopulation, but there are also theories that state this is done to keep citizens docile. There are a great number of films on vegetarianism, organic diets, and general health and wellness, but there are only a select few which approach the topic from a conspiratorial perspective.

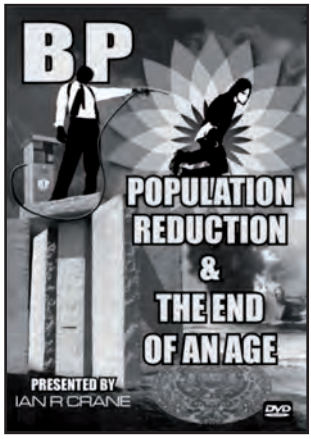
Also included in this chapter are conspiracy theories on HIV/AIDS, chemtrails, and the HAARP program.

REVIEWS

BP POPULATION REDUCTION & THE END OF THE AGE (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Ian Crane

Production Company: None listed



This filmed lecture by Ian Crane warrants inclusion on the merit of being one of the only works to date on the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Crane begins with a brief history of the dates April 19 and 20: a history that includes such conspiratorial events as the siege at Waco, the Oklahoma City bombing, the birth of Hitler, the Columbine High School massacre, and, most recently, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Per Crane, this is not mere coincidence. April 19 and 20 are the first dates of the fire feast of Baal, a Christian demon and the original form of "Beelzebub." The opening of this feast is marked with a great sacrifice, according to Crane, and the BP blowout is, like the other events mentioned, a form of population control.

This supernatural conspiracy is merely the prelude to the meat of Crane's presentation, which discusses several more readily verifiable—and troubling—aspects of the Deepwater Horizon failure. Chief among these is BP's use of the oil dispersant Corexit, which both minimizes the appearance of the spill and is decidedly more harmful than the oil itself. Crane presents Corexit as being the main culprit at work here, being used by the Illuminati to contaminate the water, soil, and wildlife in an effort to reduce the Earth's population. As proof, Crane points to the mysterious Georgia Guidestones, which call for the Earth's population to be kept at below 500 million, less than ten percent of the current population. Other conspiracies Crane presents point to foreknowledge by BP and includes the fact that BP's CEO Tony Hayward sold a large amount of stock immediately before the blowout. Crane successfully proves a conspiracy to "spin" media coverage of the event, showing how coverage in the United Kingdom was skewed so as not to discourage tourism to the area.

The premise of *BP Population Reduction & the End of the Age* is that the oil spill was an intentional action by BP designed to kill as many people as possible. It is an Illuminati/New World Order conspiracy theory and Crane uses the conclusion of his lecture to digress from the oil spill and cover other aspects of the Illuminati depopulation agenda, such as financial panics and terror attacks. His presentation isn't all

bleak, however, and concludes with an inspirational music video and a message of hope. Crane loses focus at points in the lecture, but the information he presents about BP is intriguing and unique enough that the viewer will stay with him during these moments.

GLOBAL WARMING OR GLOBAL GOVERNANCE?

(year unknown, c. 2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Dr Michael S Coffman

Production Company: Sovereignty International Environmental Perspectives, Inc.

Of the many response films made in the wake of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Global Warming or Global Governance?* is one of the few to take an explicitly conspiratorial approach to the topic. The film wastes little time declaring Gore's Oscar winner to be an outright fabrication, citing the many scientists who disagree with the film's claims and methodology as proof. Depending on which side of the argument you're on, these scientists are either "global warming sceptics" or "crackpots," and *Global Warming or Global Governance?* does little to remove the emotional charge implicit in this debate.

The refutations of Gore's claims presented here are nearly identical to those in other, non-Conspiracy Cinema climate sceptic films, some of which also claim that the factual errors in *An Inconvenient Truth* are intentional. Where *Global Warming or Global Governance?* distinguishes itself is in the reason it gives as motivation for these errors. The film states that global warming is a hoax concocted to introduce a one world government—that is to say, a New World Order. All the arguments about shrinking polar ice caps and the extinction of polar bears are simply smoke and mirrors designed to make people more readily accept the authority of international climate control bodies. These climate control monitoring groups are the next phase in the introduction of the New World Order, according to the film.

More than half of *Global Warming or Global Governance?* is dedicated to New World Order conspiracy theories and it presents many of the same arguments we've seen elsewhere. This material is presented well, but ignores the crucial point that the Bush administration—so often connected to the New World Order—rejected the Kyoto Protocol to reduce global warming, and the film calls the Bush counter-proposal

"superior" to the treaty. When arguing that there is a shadowy group determined to conquer the world, claiming that the group engages in public infighting over the details of its hoax seems to erode the credibility of such a theory. The commingling of science and conspiracy theory in *Global Warming or Global Governance?* makes for entertaining viewing but neither aspect of its message will be entirely convincing.

HIDDEN AGENDA: THE FLUORIDE DECEPTION
(year unknown)

THE FLUORIDE DECEPTION (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: 1. Dr Stanley Monteith 2. Christopher Bryson
Production Company: 1. Radio Liberty 2. Fluoride Action Network

Two identically titled films that illustrate both sides of the anti-fluoride movement: the health concerns and the conspiracy theories. *Hidden Agenda* is a lecture by Stanley Monteith who, in addition to listing the negative health effects of the chemical, believes it to be part of the New World Order agenda of depopulation. The more recent *Fluoride Deception* lists the same health concerns but the conspiracy here is that these negative effects are being concealed from the public, while the film stops short of assigning a motive. For *The Fluoride Deception*, the true conspiracy is a financial one as it states that the fluoride added to drinking water is actually industrial waste that big corporations have lobbied the government to able to dump.

Neither *Fluoride Deception* is a particularly well-made film, but they are two of the only Conspiracy Cinema films dedicated exclusively to this topic.

THE MARKETING OF MADNESS: ARE WE ALL INSANE?
(2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: Citizens Commission on Human Rights

The Marketing of Madness ends with a call for viewers to freely copy the documentary to distribute to friends in order to rid the world of "the scourge of psychiatry." The preceding film is not as forthcoming with its intentions, and it is a three hour ride to get to this shockingly

Half a million American children are on antipsychotic medications: The Marketing of Madness.

honest finale. *The Marketing of Madness* is produced by the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a mental health watchdog group that is an offshoot of the Church of Scientology.

The Marketing of Madness is as much a history lesson as it is a Conspiracy Cinema film, tracing the evolution of psychiatry from its earliest days. Particular attention is paid to the use of psychiatric drugs, with which the film takes the biggest issue. *The Marketing of Madness* points out, perhaps rightly so, that the majority of psychotropic drugs are accompanied by heavy promotional campaigns and many professionals prescribe them based on marketing rather than efficacy. In doing so, the film also gives audiences a history of illegal drugs, taking great joy in pointing out that cocaine and amphetamines were once considered useful tools for treating mental issues.

The Marketing of Madness makes some salient points about the overuse of psychotropic drugs. It offers no alternative solution, however, and appears to advocate the abandonment of the entire psychiatric industry, drugs and all. According to the film, the industry is engaged in a conspiracy to defraud the public into thinking that it is a useful science, and covering up the fact that is irreparably harming them by prescribing harmful and unnecessary drugs. The United States government is part of the conspiracy for allowing the drugs to be marketed without sufficient testing. Although the conspiracy pedigree of *The Marketing of Madness* seems a bit thin, a brief appearance by noted JFK conspiracist Jim Marrs solidifies its Conspiracy Cinema status.

The film is structured like an educational film more than a documentary. The main ideas of the film are repeated frequently to ensure the viewer gets the point. *The Marketing of Madness* is overlong by at least an hour, maybe more. It suffers from an overabundance of ex-

amples, belaboring its points and tiring the viewer. I believe that the filmmaker's motives were pure and worthy of further study, however. Much harsher attacks on psychiatry appear in other films, as do more nefarious motives than simply profit.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights has produced other films that are very similar to *The Marketing of Madness* but take a more direct approach to criticizing the field of psychiatry. Titles include: *Psychiatry: Industry of Death*, *Psychiatry's Prescription for Violence*, *Making a Killing*, and *Dead Wrong: How Psychiatric Drugs Can Kill Your Child*.

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO MONSANTO (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Marie-Monique Robin
Production Company: Arte/National Film Board of Canada

A joint production of French television network Arte and the National Film Board of Canada, *The World According to Monsanto* was the result of a three year investigation by journalist Marie-Monique Robin. It is one of the strongest Conspiracy Cinema films made on the topic of health conspiracies but, chillingly, the things presented in the film are all too real. Made at the height of the GMO controversy in Europe, *The World According to Monsanto* still has not been officially released in the United States or the United Kingdom.

Monsanto is the world's leading biological agriculture company, most widely known for their popular herbicide RoundUp. Though Monsanto brands itself around the usefulness of RoundUp, the company also created more controversial chemicals such as the defoliant Agent Orange, the sweetener aspartame, and PCBs—polychlorinated biphenyls. The latter has been banned worldwide for its cancer-causing effects, and Monsanto was found guilty of exposing an entire town to the carcinogen when they illegally disposed of it in Anniston, Alabama.

Despite the questionable nature of many of its products, Monsanto has had to endure very little interference from the US government. Robin traces the quasi-incestuous relationship between the Food and Drug Administration and Monsanto, with executives regularly bouncing between the two groups to ensure that Monsanto's products are approved for use in the United States. One such invention that was quickly approved was recombinant bovine growth hormone, or rBGH, which was subsequently banned in Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia, and New

Zealand over concerns about its safety. Monsanto is also the biggest producer of GMOs, genetically modified organisms, which continue to be an issue of growing public and political controversy in many nations.

The word "conspiracy" is never used by the film, but *The World According to Monsanto* makes the existence of one clear just the same. It is undeniable that the company received favorable treatment from the US government in order to distribute its products despite their poor track record. If *The World According to Monsanto* has a fault, it is that it doesn't go far enough in proving that Monsanto's current products, GMOs and rBGH, are harmful. It more than adequately makes the case that the company engaged in unscrupulous dealings to gain approval, but the arguments it makes about the potential downside to this are based more on Monsanto's previous misdeeds than on scientific proof.

This misstep is minor, however, and *The World According to Monsanto* is one of the most convincing films to appear in this book. Marie-Monique Robin's other films on health issues (*Our Daily Poison* and *Eye Thieves*) and political issues (*Torture: Made in the USA* and *Death Squads*) are all highly recommended.

HIV/AIDS

THE FACTS

AIDS, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, is a global pandemic and a major health concern for the United Nations and governments around the world. Human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, weakens the immune system and is the cause of AIDS. Although AIDS is an advanced form of HIV infection and therefore a separate condition, the two terms are used interchangeably in most medical studies, reports, and media coverage of the disease. In 2010, *The UNAIDS Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* reported that in 2009 over thirty-three million people were infected with HIV/AIDS, with the largest concentration of twenty-two million in sub-Saharan Africa, which represents five percent of that region's adult population. Over half of those infected with HIV/AIDS globally are female and less than one percent below the age

of fifteen. There were an estimated two million AIDS related deaths in 2009, a number significantly higher than in previous years.

HIV/AIDS is contracted through unprotected sexual contact, intravenously through shared needles, receiving infected blood, or through unsanitary medical equipment, or transmitted from an infected mother to her child.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

AIDS is believed to have existed as early as the 1800s but it was first identified as a unique disease in the United States in 1980 and 1981. An inexplicable rise in cases of the rare cancer Kaposi's sarcoma, coupled with various forms of pneumonia, appeared in New York and Los Angeles, primarily in homosexual adult males, and was temporarily dubbed GRID, or Gay Related Immune Disease. The term was biased and misleading since many cases appeared in heterosexuals, and the condition was renamed AIDS in July 1982 by the US Center for Disease Control (CDC). AIDS cases soon appeared globally, and the disease became the focus of growing public concern as it was still unclear how the disease was transmitted and which segments of the population were at the greatest risk of infection.

The disease that would be renamed HIV in 1986 was discovered independently by American and French scientists, and the true "discoverer" of the virus was a point of contention in the scientific community for many years. HIV is a retrovirus that attacks T-cells in the blood, the body's primary method of disease prevention. In light of the discovery of HIV, AIDS was then redefined as the terminal stage of HIV infection and in 1987 the first drug to treat HIV infection, AZT, was released.

The origin of HIV/AIDS is believed to be a species of West African chimpanzee and lowland gorilla, which can develop a disease very similar to HIV known as SIV, simian immunodeficiency virus. There are several theories on how the disease transitioned from apes to humans, the most common involving humans contracting SIV from being bitten by an infected animal and the virus later mutating into HIV.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The common thread running through all HIV/AIDS related conspiracy theories is that the disease is man-made, with differences only arising in questions of by whom and for what purpose. In the majority of theories, the culprit is the United States government, more specifically, the Department of Defense. The US military was actively involved in the creation of biological weapons for the majority of the twentieth century but the country has, as of October 2010, destroyed eighty percent of its stockpile. Theories that accuse the US military of developing HIV/AIDS as a chemical or biological weapon invariably cite an approved 1969 request by the Department of Defense for ten million dollars of taxpayer funds to research and create a virus that would destroy the immune system. There is no official report on the results of this research, so theorists assume it was successful and link it to the first appearances of AIDS in 1979. The method by which HIV/AIDS made the journey from laboratory to the population is believed to be a three-year program of Hepatitis B vaccinations spearheaded by the United States Public Health Service, which focused on homosexual and bisexual males in major American cities such as New York and Los Angeles. The decision to spread the infection via gay males is seen as a purposeful attempt to commit covert genocide on the homosexual population of the United States, and other theories expand on this idea to have the genocide include blacks, Hispanics, and the poor.

More far reaching HIV/AIDS conspiracies involve a similar origin for the diseases but have the dissemination occur via smallpox vaccinations utilized globally by the UN's World Health Organization. Since the WHO operates almost exclusively in the Third World, this theory hypothesizes that HIV/AIDS was developed as a depopulation agent. The CIA published a dossier on their website in 2009 revealing the existence of Operation INFEKTION, a KGB program of disinformation designed to spread the idea that AIDS was a US invention aimed at both its own citizens and the Third World. While it is likely that this campaign is responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS conspiracy theories internationally, the nearly identical theories that appeared in the West seem to have been developed independent of the propaganda campaign, despite the CIA's attribution of all HIV/AIDS conspiracies to the Soviet plot.

Other HIV/AIDS conspiracy theories ignore the man-made origin

theory for one that has been invoked for almost every deadly disease throughout the years. There is a belief that an AIDS cure or vaccine is readily available and has been for years, but is being withheld from the public because it is more profitable to treat the disease than cure it. Alternate takes on the cure theory eschew profit motivations for a social engineering goal: the cure is being suppressed to prevent an anticipated rise in sexual promiscuity in the wake of the eradication of AIDS. Some of the more eccentric conspiracy theories about HIV/AIDS originate not with the public, but in the medical and scientific communities. Organizations such as the Group for the Scientific Reappraisal of the HIV/AIDS Hypothesis claim hundreds of members and question the theory that HIV causes the AIDS virus, and other groups question the very existence of HIV/AIDS altogether.

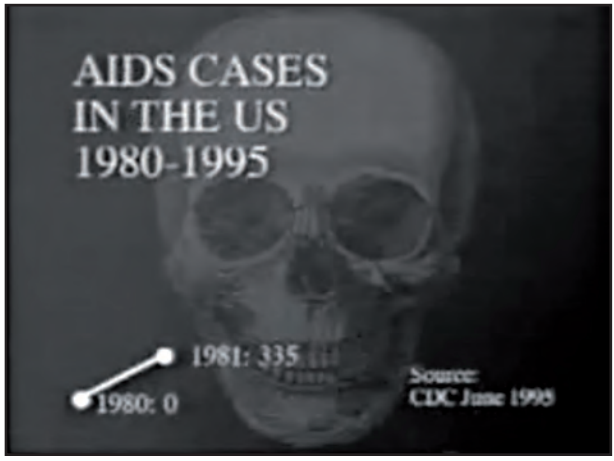
Despite man-made AIDS theories being prevalent in conspiracism, I was unable to locate a film dedicated solely to that idea.

REVIEWS

THE AIDS HOAX: 10 REASONS WHY HIV IS NOT THE CAUSE OF AIDS (1996)

Filmmaker/Director: Stephen Allen
Production Company: Starvision Productions

Several of *The AIDS Hoax*'s ten reasons are based directly on the research of Dr Peter Duesberg. Duesberg is the foremost name in what has become known as "AIDS denialism," a group of scientists who believe that HIV is not the cause of AIDS. *The AIDS Hoax* disputes the HIV/AIDS connection for the same reasons that Duesberg does: because it ignores the controversial behavioral model of infection. All AIDS theories admit that the disease is sexually transmitted, and thus, behavior is a factor, but the behavioral model favored by Duesberg and the film assumes that specific behaviors are riskier than others. *The AIDS Hoax* presents research stating that the risk of transmission is much lower in heterosexuals than homosexuals, a questionable and perhaps even irresponsible hypothesis. As Duesberg does, the film links AIDS more concretely with heavy drug use than sex, and discriminatorily links this drug use with homosexuals and minorities as a way to explain the high-



The AIDS Hoax.

er rates of infection in those groups.

The AIDS Hoax does an adequate job of sparking debate, but its approach will be considered distasteful by some. Many of the facts and statistics presented in the film are shown etched into computer generated tombstones. Even if one agrees with the scientific arguments in the film, this is in incredibly poor taste considering the mortality associated with the disease. The conspiracy presented in *The AIDS Hoax* is that pharmaceutical companies and scientists have obscured the true causes of AIDS in order to profit from research and treatments. Since the film attributes the promulgation of the hoax to nothing more than greed and indifference, it makes it difficult to believe that so many would willingly go along with the deception while people died. *The AIDS Hoax* is a rare example of a film where its claims would be made more believable through the addition of some external boogeyman like the Illuminati.

The film was rereleased under the title *HIV = AIDS: Fact or Fraud?* The film's website is equally callous, using "AID$" instead of AIDS at every opportunity. Curiously, viewers who buy the film direct from the filmmaker will receive the Conspiracy Cinema film *9-11 Mysteries* free of charge.

HOUSE OF NUMBERS: ANATOMY OF AN EPIDEMIC (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Brent Leung
Production Company: Knowledge Matters Productions

Few entries into the Conspiracy Cinema canon have elicited as im-

mediate and as negative a reaction as *House of Numbers*. The film received scathing reviews in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, two publications not typically known for even acknowledging the existence of this genre of cinema. Medical journals also accused filmmaker Leung of intentionally misleading his audience and several of those interviewed in the film came forward to claim that *House of Numbers* was edited in a manner that misrepresented their true opinions. Furthermore, a "debunker" website with a similar domain name to the official site was set up so that the curious would be likely to stumble upon it when searching for the film.

There are also very few Conspiracy Cinema films that are as compellingly made as *House of Numbers* or attempt to address such an emotionally charged topic so maturely. Director Leung also serves as our on-camera host as he questions the very existence of AIDS and the veracity of its official history. Leung's main arguments are based in events during the early years of the disease, with his central premise being that HIV cannot be accurately defined or isolated and, therefore, does not actually exist. As proof, he offers interviews with members of the scientific community that question the existence of HIV as well as several individuals who have been previously misdiagnosed with HIV. Rather than asserting a man-made origin for the disease, Leung's position is that the disease was wholly fabricated by researchers and disease control centers desperate for an epidemic and the influx of funding it would bring. Leung also cites a conspiracy to keep the true nature of the disease secret to increase pharmaceutical companies' profits through selling treatments.

Leung's claims are referred to as "AIDS denialism" by their detractors and, admittedly, Leung does not offer a satisfactory explanation for the disease's mortality levels, only the rising number of diagnoses. He does bring up salient points about the HIV/AIDS diagnosis process, which can vary widely from country to country. This is a compliance issue that members of the medical community regularly admit; someone diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in the United Kingdom may or may not be diagnosed with the disease in France, for example, depending on which test is given. Leung gets considerable mileage out of this point, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where he calls into question the validity of all HIV/AIDS diagnoses.

Ultimately, *House of Numbers* is of a greater emotional impact than

it is convincing. The interviews with those currently and formerly diagnosed with HIV/AIDS are touching but biased since no one giving a dissenting view to Leung's is shown. While I hesitate to label *House of Numbers* "dangerous" in the same manner as others have, I will admit that Leung's message is rather short-sighted. Unlike other conspiracy theories which work primarily in abstract, were Leung's theory that HIV/AIDS is a fabrication be proven correct, it would immediately impact upon the lives of tens of millions of people. Leung gives us no path forward should the "truth" come out, and he offers no explanation for what is actually wrong with the millions currently diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and the debilitating and often fatal symptoms they have. His stated motivation is to start a dialogue about HIV/AIDS but, all too often, Leung answers his own questions. Rather than facilitating a debate on the topic, *House of Numbers* precludes debate by making the opposing viewpoint to Leung's untenable.

Weather Conspiracies: Chemtrails and HAARP

chemtrails

the facts

The use of commercial airlines for travel has increased sharply in the decades following World War II, with the largest increases coming after 1970. For example, the number of passengers on commercial flights in the United Kingdom has increased nearly five-fold since 1970, going from fifty million to 241 million in 2007 according to the Office for National Statistics. A comparable level of air travel is seen in most every nation, and the United States has averaged over ten million flights per year since 2003. With the dramatic increase of air traffic, the average person is significantly more likely to see planes flying overhead today than at any other time in their life, making the chances that they will take notice of the phenomenon of "contrails" greater.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

Condensation trails, also known as "contrails" or vapor trails, are a naturally occurring phenomenon related to how the jet engines used in civilian and military aircraft burn fuel. The combustion of jet fuel results in the expulsion of carbon and hydrogen, which combine with oxygen in the atmosphere to create carbon dioxide and water, respectively. Due to the lower air temperatures at higher altitudes, the water immediately condenses into water droplets or ice crystals, essentially forming long, straight clouds in the wake of the aircraft. Contrails are most frequently seen in association with aircraft flying at or above 26,000 feet (8,000 meters) but their production can be influenced by a number of factors, including engine temperature and local weather conditions.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Some conspiracy theorists believe that the lines trailing behind planes are actually "chemtrails," chemicals being actively sprayed by the plane. A relatively new theory, chemtrails began to surface in conspiracy theory in the late 1990s and the believed origin of the theory is from an August 1996 US Air Force strategy paper entitled *Weather as a Force Multiplier: Owning the Weather in 2025*. The paper outlines a hypothetical scenario in the (then) distant future where the United States government has the ability to modify weather conditions in strategic locations during military operations. One of the suggested tactics was the employment of aircraft in "cloud generation and seeding operations" to impair the enemy's communications and to create localized weather events such as thunderstorms. It is unclear if the timing of the paper and the popularity of the chemtrail theory are simply coincidental, however, but it has become one of the most frequently cited sources of "proof" for theorists' claims.

Chemtrail conspiracy theories all contain the central belief that airplanes of unknown origin are actively making chemtrails over North America, Europe, and Asia, but theories vary widely on who is doing the spraying, what is being sprayed, and for what purpose. The most common theory is that the governments of various nations are spray-

Chemtrails: Clouds of Death.

ing aluminum, barium, and strontium into the atmosphere for the purposes of causing illness in humans and animals and poisoning natural resources such as soil and water. The purported motive for this is the gradual enfeebling of the citizenry as a form of depopulation linked to the New World Order agenda (see THE NEW WORLD ORDER), but occasionally a profit motive is given involving "Big Food" and "Big Pharma" (see HEALTH CONSPIRACIES). Other theories involving the disbursement of aluminum cite the metal's reflective properties as being used to combat climate change. Some of the earliest theories about chemtrails—particularly those originating in the US—focused primarily on chemtrails as a form of weather modification and often link chemtrails to the HAARP program (see below).

Chemtrail conspiracy believers are more globally diverse than other conspiracy theorists, and chemtrail activity has been reported in almost every nation. It is also one of the more openly discussed theories, and government agencies in the US, the UK, and Canada have each officially declared chemtrails to be a baseless theory. Many chemtrail believers are actively petitioning their respective governments to investigate the phenomenon more thoroughly. Additionally, the chemtrail theory attracts many who likely would not consider themselves "conspiracy theorists," such as ecological preservation groups and naturalists.

HAARP

THE FACTS

The High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP) is located at the HAARP Research Base in Gakona, Alaska. HAARP research began in 1990 as a joint initiative between the US Air Force, the US Navy, and several universities, and the HAARP base opened in 1993. The main component of the facility is the Ionosphere Research Instrument (IRI), a phased array transmitter—essentially a series of radio frequency transmitters capable of working in sync. It is the third such site the United States has operated, and countries such as Norway and Russia operate similar research facilities.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

HAARP's stated goal is to study the ionosphere, which is used primarily for communications purposes. The ionosphere undergoes unpredictable fluctuations and by gaining a better understanding of these changes and their causes, HAARP hopes to improve communication and navigation technology. To induce changes in the ionosphere, the IRI transmits high frequency radio signals into it, energizing and heating it. HAARP's official website (www.haarp.alaska.edu/) publishes the project's findings and notes that the effects of the transmissions into the ionosphere are harmless and dissipate within a matter of minutes.

THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The conspiracy theories involving HAARP focus on the heavy military involvement in the project, particularly that of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). DARPA's research is exclusive to projects with military applications, so their presence as a key player in HAARP raises many eyebrows in the conspiracy community. The stated uses of HAARP have no apparent military use other than communications, so there are a variety of alternate theories about its true purpose.

The primary ability attributed to HAARP is that of weather control.

Studying the ionosphere? HAARP.

By heating part of the atmosphere above Alaska, it is believed, the weather in another location will be affected. The alleged effects of HAARP are exclusively negative and include tsunamis in the Pacific and Hurricane Katrina, and theories vary as to whether these are intended or accidental results of weather manipulation. Related to this is the belief that HAARP has the power to cause earthquakes through its ability to transmit frequencies into the Earth's crust.

Other abilities attributed to HAARP include mind control via the emission of microwaves and electromagnetic low frequency (ELF) radiation. Alternate theories see a correlation between HAARP and Nikola Tesla's "death beam," which he claimed could destroy structures over great distances. The massive amounts of power both created and used by the facility are often cited in such theories.

REVIEWS

AEROSOL CRIMES aka **CHEMTRAILS** (2005)

Filmmaker/Director: Clifford E Carnicom
Production Company: Carnicom Institute

Many chemtrail theorists may not be aware of it, but most of the information on which they base their theories comes from Clifford E Carnicom. Since early 1999, Carnicom has used his self-titled website to spread the message about chemtrails, making him one of the first theorists working exclusively on the topic. His take on the chemtrail

phenomenon is largely an environmental/public health one but his desire to find the perpetrators invariably leads him into the realm of conspiracy theory and, in 2005, to the world of Conspiracy Cinema.

Aerosol Crimes doesn't challenge the standard format of the chemtrail subgenre, meaning much of the film consists of footage of the skies. Carnicom offers viewers a surprise, however, one I've yet to see duplicated or incorporated into the hours of chemtrail films I've watched. For an all-too-brief moment, *Aerosol Crimes* offers a clear close-up of a plane making a chemtrail. Not the typical far-off shots of what could possibly be either a con- or chemtrail, but detailed footage of an airplane emitting two thin white trails from the tips of the horizontal stabilizer, not the jet engines. I am at a loss to provide an explanation for what is occurring in the footage, but I'll admit that I'm far more surprised at how it is treated as a non-event. Carnicom has what is essentially the Holy Grail of chemtrail footage and he ignores it to return to the standard progression of these films: more sky footage, interviews with people who claim to have been sickened by chemtrails, and still more sky footage.

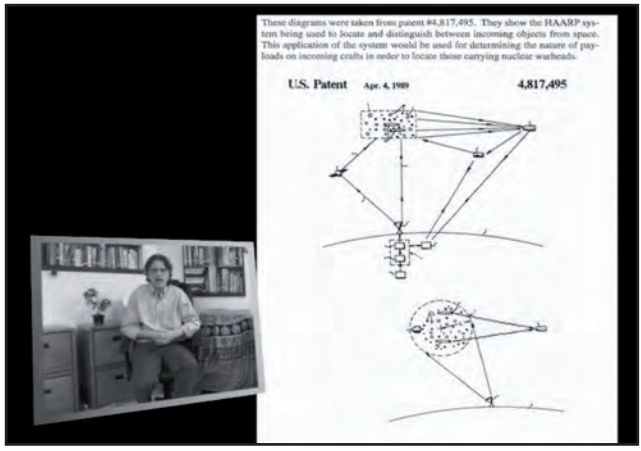
Aerosol Crimes' forays into conspiracy theory are infrequent but memorable. Carnicom discusses the strange visitors to his website when he initially published his first theories on chemtrails: a list that includes several government agencies, each branch of the US military, pharmaceutical companies, and media outlets. Again he fails to capitalize on these opportunities for speculation, and it becomes increasingly clear that Carnicom's concerns are exclusively environmental rather than conspiratorial. That approach may be why this film—and its compelling footage—has been seldom seen.

ANGELS DON'T PLAY THIS HAARP: ADVANCES IN TESLA TECHNOLOGY (1995)

ANGELS STILL DON'T PLAY THIS HAARP (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Dr Nick Begich & Brad Swenson
Production Company: Earthpulse

It would be impossible to have a discussion about HAARP conspiracy theories without mentioning the work of Alaskan environmentalist Dr Nick Begich. Begich's book, *Angels Don't Play This HAARP*, is the


These diagrams were taken from patent #4,817,495. They show the HAARP system being used to locate and distinguish between incoming objects from space. This application of the system would be used for determining the nature of payloads on incoming crafts in order to locate those carrying nuclear warheads.
U.S. Patent Apr. 4, 1989 4,817,495

Dr Nick Begich describes the HAARP patents in Angels Still Don't Play This HAARP.

seminal treatise on the theory, and it is quite possible that no one—be they conspiracy theorists or not—would know very much about the HAARP project were it not for him. The HAARP facility is essentially in Begich's backyard, so he was one of the first to speak out about the topic and remains the primary source for HAARP information to this day.

Begich's contributions to HAARP conspiracy theory cannot be overestimated, but the same cannot be said for his forays into Conspiracy Cinema. His two films, *Angels Don't Play This HAARP* and *Angels Still Don't Play This HAARP*, are little more than filmed lectures and consist solely of a static shot of Begich. The earlier film in particular is essentially a summary of his book, and is glacially paced and filled with technical jargon. Filmed lectures typically only appeal to those who are extremely interested in the topic, a fact that makes them unnecessary since the viewer will already be quite familiar with the information given. This is certainly the case for this pair of films. They will offer nothing new to those familiar with Begich's work and will be unwatchable for those who aren't.

It is not my intention to criticize the information presented by the films. On the contrary, both instalments of *Angels* present more verifiable facts per minute than most Conspiracy Cinema films do in their entire running times. Begich lacks the charisma to make these films engaging, however, and, quite frankly, a good portion of the material will go over most viewers heads. Those curious about Begich's theories are advised to read his book or to watch another HAARP Conspiracy

Cinema film, almost all of which feature him heavily and are infinitely more watchable.

CHEMTRAILS: CLOUDS OF DEATH (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: A Heaven Can Wait Production

A BLUNT TITLE FOR A SHORT, BLUNT FILM. A CHILD'S VOICE PLAINTIVELY asks, "Daddy, where did the blue sky go?" to start the film and things only get more bizarre from there. Psychedelically colored footage of a hippie girl walking through a forest is interrupted by our narrator, whose electronically processed voice informs the audience that the world is not what it seems. The governments of the world are spraying toxic chemicals on their citizens, according to the narrator, a fact verified by the legion of photos and videos found on the internet. To back this claim up, footage of 9-11 is shown before the film heads into an odd but effective montage of sick children superimposed over footage of a burning airplane.

On screen text is sparse and usually provocative: "Chemtrails suck" and "MASS MURDER" are but two examples. *Clouds of Death* presents chemtrails as a health issue and flatly states that claims of chemtrails being used for weather modification are simply disinfo campaigns to throw researchers off the trail. *Clouds of Death* also breaks with convention by claiming that chemtrails are older than 1998, stating that examples of the phenomenon can be seen in back issues of *National Geographic* and in films and television shows as early as the 1980s.

The weak point of *Clouds of Death* is that it never offers up a definitive purpose for the spraying. Why world governments would want to intentionally sicken their people is left a mystery in favor of a discussion about how to combat chemtrails. *Clouds of Death* recommends constructing a small version of Wilhelm Reich's "cloudbuster"—redubbed a "chembuster"—but doesn't show the viewer footage of it working. Clocking in at under a half hour, *Clouds of Death*'s unique take on the phenomenon warrants a viewing, and it should be commended for injecting a little levity and humor into the usually dour world of chemtrail Conspiracy Cinema.

CHEMTRAILS: MYSTERY LINES IN THE SKY & EYE WITNESS (2000)

Filmmaker/Director: Will Thomas & Paul Grignon
Production Company: Lifeboat News

Chemtrails: Mystery Lines in the Sky is one of the earliest films to address the chemtrail phenomenon and is therefore intriguing as a glimpse into the early stages of the theory. This documentary is also an example of a well-made pre-9-11 work of Conspiracy Cinema. It is concise (less than thirty minutes long), puts forth its arguments clearly, and offers the audience multiple theories from which to choose.

Chemtrails: Mystery Lines in the Sky pinpoints the genesis of chemtrails to November of 1998, but no explanation for the specificity is given. The film then lays out the consensus view of chemtrail theory by describing the use of both commercial and military aircraft and explaining the difference between contrails and chemtrails. Unlike the multiple chemicals cited in later theories on the subject, *Chemtrails: Mystery Lines in the Sky* points to aluminum as the main ingredient in the spraying. The negative impact on the public's health is considered a secondary effect of chemtrails, and the main motive given is one that appears to have faded from more contemporary theories. *Chemtrails: Mystery Lines in the Sky* points the finger at a new villain, insurance companies, as the perpetrators of chemtrails, with their motivation being a purely financial one. By blocking out the sun's harmful rays, they are attempting to reduce the number of skin cancer claims and reduce global warming, thereby lessening the impact of natural disasters such as hurricanes. It is understandable why the second half of this theory faded in the wake of Katrina and one wonders if the financial impact of skin cancer claims would warrant the expense of a massive airborne spraying campaign.

To the film's credit, it doesn't limit itself to just this single theory, and points to rising influenza deaths in the United States and the United Kingdom as another, possibly intentional, effect of chemtrails. Unfortunately, *Chemtrails: Mystery Lines in the Sky* provides more speculation than evidence, and offers no proof for its claims apart from footage of alleged chemtrails. The theories the film presents are intriguing but none to the point of being persuasive. Appended to the end of *Chemtrails: Mystery Lines in the Sky*, is the five-minute short *Eye Witness* by co-director Paul Grignon. Grignon explains his reasoning for becoming

involved in the production of the feature and his subsequent documentation of chemtrails above his home. How long a legitimate contrail will persist in the sky is the primary point of contention between chemtrail theorists and debunkers, and Grignon's documentation of a chemtrail/contrail that appears in the sky for over three hours will likely be more persuasive than most of *Chemtrails: Mystery Lines in the Sky*. Though it is still based in pure speculation, the personal aspect of *Eye Witness* tends to give it more credence. The inclusion of footage showing Grignon himself as well as his home makes him seem more firm in his belief, and therefore more convincing, than *Chemtrails*' footage of the sky without reference to location. His willingness to appear on camera makes him more worthy of attention than the disembodied voice of the narrator.

DON'T TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER (2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: Ill Eagle Films/Skyline Productions

A STATIC CAMERA POINTS AT A CLEAR SKY WHILE OMINOUS MUSIC RISES ON the soundtrack. Using time-lapse footage, we are shown what occurs in that sky over the course of the day: long, thin trails form and disappear, some lasting longer than others. Sometimes alone, other times in clusters, the sky eventually becomes awash with these trails, becoming a thick, off-white mass of clouds. As day turns to night, the clouds dissipate and the trails become less frequent, finally ceasing as the sun sets.

Thus begins *Don't Talk about the Weather*, the four hour magnum opus of chemtrail cinema. *Don't Talk about the Weather* chronicles one man's investigation into the aerial phenomena taking place above his tiny British town. "It quickly became more than obvious to me that the persistent contrails were not condensation at all," he states, then lists a host of medical problems that he and members of his family only experienced after exposure to the persistent contrails. The remainder of *Don't Talk about the Weather* details his research into the chemtrail theory, the film showing the papers he has read and clips from other Conspiracy Cinema films on the topic.

Don't Talk about the Weather approaches the chemtrail theory from every possible angle, analyzing the depopulation and weather modification theories at length. The film also spends a good deal of time examining the way chemtrail theory is received by the conspiracy com-

Don't Talk about the Weather.

munity, and points out several mainstream and conspiratorial "disinfo" campaigns designed to ridicule believers. At the two hour mark, *Don't Talk about the Weather* shifts its focus to the larger world of conspiracy theory, offering up segments on 9-11, 7-7, the Madrid subway bombings, and the New World Order. It returns to the topic of chemtrails at its conclusion, the lengthy digression having adequately established the theory's place in the greater pantheon of conspiracy.

Don't Talk about the Weather is admirable for a variety of reasons, chief of which is its ability to be engrossing and watchable for the entirety of its four hours. The film's length works in its favor in that it allows every aspect of the conspiracy to be discussed, making this film an excellent primer for newcomers to the theory. Some digressions are overlong, and the length of the clips from other Conspiracy Cinema films—particularly overly familiar ones—will tax some viewers patience. Ultimately, the best facet of *Don't Talk about the Weather* is its investigative format. The film follows the anonymous filmmaker's journey from curiosity about one topic into the seemingly endless rabbit hole of conspiracy theory: one that most viewers of the film will find easily relatable.

HOLES IN HEAVEN: HAARP AND ADVANCES IN TESLA TECHNOLOGY (1998)

Filmmaker/Director: Paula Randol-Smith & Wendy Robbins
Production Company: Gallina Projects

Holes in Heaven has the dual distinction of being one of the first documentaries on the topic of HAARP and one of the select few Conspiracy Cinema films to feature a mainstream celebrity. Actor Martin Sheen provides the narration for the film, which gives a comprehensive overview of the myriad of conspiracy theories on the topic. Sheen's presence does not give additional validity to the information presented, however, and most of what *Holes in Heaven* attributes to HAARP is implied rather than expressly proven.

Sheen's voice does make the film more engaging but the most intriguing aspect of *Holes in Heaven* as a piece of Conspiracy Cinema is the fact that both sides of the issue are presented equally. The film was made with the cooperation of the US military and members of the HAARP team, so viewers have the rare opportunity to hear from the "villains" of the conspiracy in their own words. Both sides of the issue are given equal time, but the film is structured in a way that offers primacy to the conspiracy theories. It does so by juxtaposing verified facts and unverified theories against each other to minimize the appearance of a difference, turning the issue into a "he said, she said" debate rather than a question of truth.

This tactic becomes evident within the film's first twenty minutes. The film points out that Dr Bernard Eastland patented several of Tesla's ideas into potential weapons, and it has Dr Eastland himself explain exactly what he envisioned and for what it could be used. Then HAARP's Project Manager and Public Affairs Director are shown explaining the capabilities of the HAARP facility. *Holes in Heaven* doesn't explicitly link the two, but the film is edited in such a manner as to lead the viewer to that conclusion. When Eastland describes the radio antennas in his weapons and then the film points out that HAARP's antennas are similar, the implication is that HAARP's antennas are weapons, despite never being explicitly stated by Dr Eastland.

Holes in Heaven continues in this manner for its entire running time, offering up examples of HAARP's abilities and then immediately ascribing a nefarious use for them. Weather control and mind control are given a large amount of time but concrete explanations for how HAARP could accomplish these goals are absent. Furthermore, *Holes in Heaven* omits the question of "why?" from its presentation entirely. Even if you accept *Holes in Heaven*'s claims of malicious weather manipulation, earthquake production, mind control, and death rays, the film falls

short of offering a purpose—or a perpetrator—for these crimes. The omission of a guilty party ultimately causes *Holes in Heaven* to raise more questions than it answers, making it significantly less effective as a persuasive work.

SKYLINES AND CLOUDBUSTERS: WEATHER MODIFICATION, CHEMTRAILS, HAARP AND ORGONE ENERGY

(year unknown, c. 2006–2008)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: Unaccredited

Skylines and Cloudbusters begins with a clip from the 1980s movie *Flash Gordon*. Ming the Merciless unleashes earthquakes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters on planet Earth simply for his own amusement. Queen's bombastic theme announces to us that Flash Gordon "will save every one of us," but instead of seeing our hero, the image fades into a slideshow presentation and our narrator informs us that we'll be learning about weather modification programs.

We see first a brief history of weather modification from rain dances to cloud seeding before the presentation moves into a discussion of the rarely mentioned "Operation: STORMFURY," an attempt to manipulate and control hurricanes. *Skylines and Cloudbusters* then moves on to a discussion of the theories of Wilhelm Reich, notably his use of "cloudbusters" to induce rain. The film then arrives at the point of its arguments and addresses HAARP and chemtrails, labeling both as an attempt to control the weather for malicious purposes. The narrator uses weather radar footage to prove that both techniques are being used frequently, pointing to any sudden appearance of a thunderstorm as evidence. The claims grow bolder as the film progresses, culminating in the claim that Hurricane Katrina was intentionally "guided" to New Orleans to create an excuse for martial law.

Skylines and Cloudbusters is hampered by an inability to stay focused on one topic, and digressions into 9-11 conspiracy theory and reverse-engineered extraterrestrial technology only serve to further muddy the already murky waters of the film's theories. Though the film is well researched, the anonymous presenter has difficulties connecting the concepts together coherently or effectively. Not helping things is the fact that the film incorporates lengthy clips from practically every

other film in this chapter, adding little to them apart from a summary. Where *Skylines and Cloudbusters* succeeds is in giving real world examples of weather modification, despite not necessarily having proof for its claims. The segment about Katrina is intriguing enough to warrant watching the film, although viewers will likely not come away with very much new information.

WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE THEY SPRAYING? (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Paul Wittenberger & Michael J Murphy
Production Company: Truth Media Productions

From a purely filmic standpoint, *What in the World are They Spraying?* is the best Conspiracy Cinema film on the topic of chemtrails made to date. It represents something far more than just a cinematic achievement, however. *What in the World are They Spraying?* is indicative of the "mainstreaming" of chemtrail theory in conspiracy circles. The chemtrail theory has only been in existence for little over a decade and has often been dismissed as being too "tinfoil hat" for many theorists and, thus, the chemtrail believers have existed on the fringes of the conspiracy community. The release of this film coincided with—but likely isn't responsible for—a growing acceptance of chemtrails as conspiracy "fact," for lack of a better term.

What in the World are They Spraying? is a vast departure from previous chemtrail Conspiracy Cinema films. It is well edited, beautifully shot, and expertly paced, a boast few Conspiracy Cinema films on any topic can make. More importantly, however, it offers data instead of speculation. Rather than simply providing the audience with "proof" in the form of footage of the skies, host Michael Murphy talks to chemists and environmental scientists who verify that there are dangerously high levels of toxic chemicals in soil and water, more so than a decade ago. Importantly, none of the scientists interviewed use the term "chemtrails," or offer any other explanation for the phenomenon, lending a greater credibility to their findings since they were made without a specific agenda. It is a very persuasive technique, and one that runs counter to the typical mode of operation for Conspiracy Cinema. *What in the World are They Spraying?* first establishes to the viewer that "something" is happening before it goes on to explain what that "something" is.

Though vastly more mainstream-friendly than other films on the

topic, *What in the World are They Spraying?* is still decidedly a Conspiracy Cinema film. Nowhere is this more evident than through the fact that filmmakers Wittenberger and Murphy take on conspiracy theorist G Edward Griffin as a "mentor" of sorts during the course of the film. Griffin is one of the most universally well respected theorists, and his participation in the film and endorsement of its message goes a long way towards convincing those conspiracists who disbelieve the theory.

What in the World are They Spraying? does not take the same approach to chemtrail theory as others have, but rather presents it as largely an environmental issue. A wise choice because it keeps the film from venturing into more speculative territory and makes it more appealing to audiences outside of the conspiracy community, such as environmentalists. The film was obviously made with a conscious desire to have the broadest appeal possible, but conspiracy theorists viewing the film won't feel excluded. On the contrary, the film has been widely praised by theorists who applaud the film's ability to reach a larger audience but still remain true to its Conspiracy Cinema origins.

Financial Conspiracies

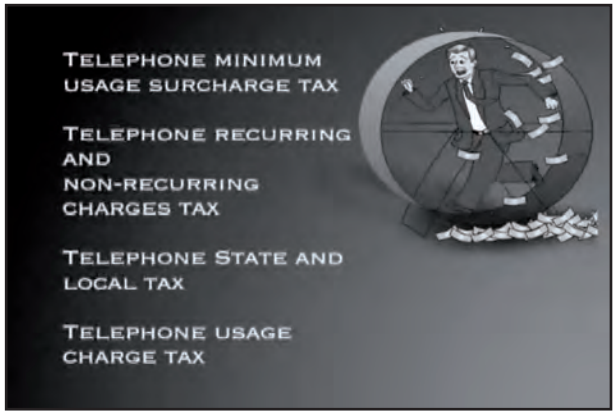
The world of finance has always attracted the conspiracy theorist and, recently, these theories are attracting more attention from those outside the community. For decades, the term "international banker" cropped up frequently in conspiracy theories, and, if used by a theorist, meant the New World Order or, when used by anti-Semites, the Jews. "International bankers" has since been replaced with the term "banksters"—a portmanteau of banker and gangster.

REVIEWS

AMERICA: FREEDOM TO FASCISM (2006)

Filmmaker/Director: Aaron Russo
Production Company: Cinema Libre Studios

Aaron Russo (1943–2007) was a larger than life personality. Rus-


TELEPHONE MINIMUM USAGE SURCHARGE TAX
TELEPHONE RECURRING AND NON-RECURRING CHARGES TAX
TELEPHONE STATE AND LOCAL TAX
TELEPHONE USAGE CHARGE TAX

Freedom to Fascism: *Taxed to death?*

so got his start as a concert promoter and nightclub owner while still in his early twenties, later moving into artist management and, eventually, movie producing. It was in the last phase of his career that Russo stepped out from a behind-the-scenes role to the spotlight, quickly becoming one of the most well-known conspiracy theorists and filmmakers. His 2006 film, *America: Freedom to Fascism* remains perhaps the most influential Conspiracy Cinema film on the topic of financial conspiracies.

Freedom to Fascism makes many arguments about the Federal Reserve System that are voiced in other Conspiracy Cinema films. Specifically, Russo cites the undue influence that the body has over its main borrower, the United States government. *Freedom to Fascism* takes an approach similar to those films by presenting the many arguments against a central bank voiced by the Founding Fathers, Andrew Jackson, and modern anti-Fed politicians like Ron Paul. Since it would be myopic to make a financial Conspiracy Cinema film without G Edward Griffin, the venerable theorist makes an appearance here to give his views on the Federal Reserve and the use of credit in its various forms.

Russo's views on the Federal Reserve do not distinguish him much from other theorists, but *Freedom to Fascism*'s other main focus does. The film is a tax-protestor manifesto, and strongly advocates that citizens stop paying income taxes to the Internal Revenue Service. Russo makes the argument that there is no law requiring American citizens to pay income tax, and documents his unsuccessful attempt to find anyone in the government who can show him the law. Included are interviews with several former IRS employees who state that upon their realization

that taxes were not mandatory, they too stopped paying them.

The final section of the film ventures into New World Order conspiracies, with Russo presenting the Federal Reserve and income taxes as just parts of a larger plan that includes one world government, RFID chips, and a North American Union. All three topics have been addressed by mainstream media outlets, and Russo operates in a mode similar to other Conspiracy Cinema films here by showing these clips with added commentary. The preceding portions of the film are more persuasive, however, as the interviews with IRS agents and legal scholars strengthen Russo's case more than news clips. Russo's involvement with the earlier portion cannot be underestimated either, and his charisma helps the film considerably.

Russo relentlessly promoted *Freedom to Fascism*, therefore it received a great deal of public scrutiny. Many of the claims he makes in the film are specious at best, and many of the tax-protestors shown—Russo included—received legal consequences for their failure to pay. A review in *The Portland Mercury* was particularly critical about the several factual errors and misquotes in the film, and stated that the legality of income tax laws wasn't worthy of debate. The criticisms of Russo's (perhaps intentional) factual errors are well-founded, but it is wrong to consider any debate unworthy. The point of conspiracism is to question authority: a brave act regardless of what course of action it guides you to take.

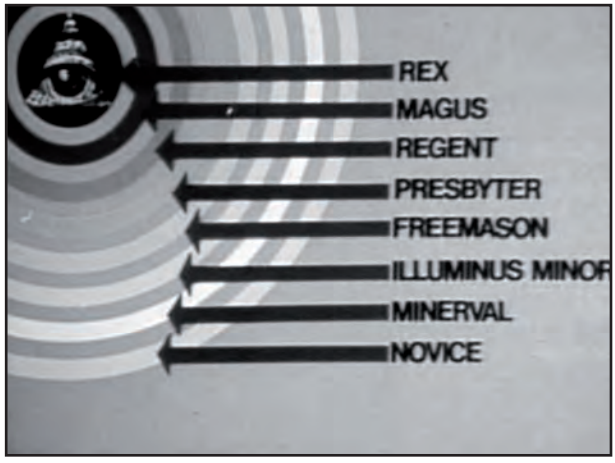
Russo passed away a year after the release of *America: Freedom to Fascism*, but made appearances in dozens of other Conspiracy Cinema films prior to his death. He made one other Conspiracy Cinema film, *Aaron Russo's Mad as Hell*, covering many of the same topics and structured like an infomercial/chat show.

Reflections and Warnings: an Interview with Aaron Russo by Alex Jones combines the works of the two conspiracy heavyweights into a single film.

THE CAPITALIST CONSPIRACY (1969)

Filmmaker/Director: G Edward Griffin
Production Company: American Media

"Conspiracy... one of the darkest words in the language of man." Thus begins theorist and historian G Edward Griffin's 1969 Conspiracy



The Capitalist Conspiracy's *Illuminati hierarchy.*

Cinema film *The Capitalist Conspiracy*. Griffin's take on the Federal Reserve is one of the first filmic attacks on the institution and Griffin can be seen as the father of Federal Reserve conspiracy theories, which have found increased mainstream acceptance in recent years. *The Capitalist Conspiracy* predates even the births of many of the Fed's most vociferous critics, and is one of the seminal works of Conspiracy Cinema.

Put simply, *The Capitalist Conspiracy* is the genesis point for modern Conspiracy Cinema and perhaps even a good deal of conspiracy theory itself. The overwhelming majority of the topics Griffin discusses are still key issues in conspiracism today. The film opens with a close up of the "All Seeing Eye" of the Illuminati and gives a brief history of proven conspiracies as an introduction. The financial aspects of the film are largely influenced by Skousen's *The Naked Capitalist* and Quigley's *Tragedy and Hope*, something Griffin readily admits. His main theory is that those rich men of the world that we call "capitalists" are simply socialists in disguise. In essence, Griffin describes the New World Order without naming it as such, even though the term would have been in use at the time. Griffin even lists groups which make up this organization including the Council on Foreign Relations, a group that would not become well known for several more years.

Behind this conspiracy are the international banking families. Griffin cautions the viewer not to assume this to be a Jewish conspiracy, correctly pointing out that the largest world banks are run by individuals from diverse backgrounds. The Federal Reserve factors into the conspiracy because it is the vehicle by which these international bankers

gained control of the United States. The film concludes with an analysis of sixties radicals, stating that they are being controlled by the international bankers to destabilize America. In this argument, strident anti-communist Griffin finds an unlikely ally in the father of the Black Power movement, Stokely Carmichael. Griffin cites speeches that Carmichael gave that made reference to a cabal of bankers controlling society, and *The Capitalist Conspiracy* presents Carmichael's ousting from the Black Panthers and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee as proof that those groups were under the control of international banking interests.

The Capitalist Conspiracy consists of still images of illustrations, essentially taking the form of a moving comic book. The technique is expertly realized, and some of these illustrations show a strong pop art influence. Now over forty years old, *The Capitalist Conspiracy* still looks and feels as if it was made recently. None of the material presented in the film has become dated, and some have enjoyed a renaissance as of late, particularly his ideas about the Federal Reserve. A landmark Conspiracy Cinema film, *The Capitalist Conspiracy* remains among the most accomplished of those films dealing with financial conspiracies.

The Capitalist Conspiracy was primarily disseminated by the John Birch Society, of which Griffin was a long-time member. These prints of the film may still be in circulation in some areas. Griffin himself rereleased the film on home video in 1982 as part of the *Hidden Agenda* series, consisting of six films dealing with the same issues addressed here.

FRANKENFED—DEPRESSION BY DESIGN (2009)

Filmmaker/Director: Anthony J Hilder
Production Company: Free World Film Works

Hilder identifies the Federal Reserve as the "monster" of the New World Order, their evil masterpiece designed to help them conquer the world. He plays up this monster analogy to the hilt, filling *FrankenFed* with gothic music, creepy sound effects, and eerie purple and yellow text. Disappointingly, we do not get one of Hilder's trademarked witticism-filled tirades to begin the film.

FrankenFed conforms more to the style of other Conspiracy Cinema films than Hilder's other work. Much of the film consists of news footage and the occasional clip from other Conspiracy Cinema pieces.

Hilder considers the Federal Reserve more dangerous than an atomic bomb: FrankenFed.

In the intervening time, *FrankenFed* presents Hilder's interviews with a variety of subjects, most notably G Edward Griffin and Jim Marrs. A good deal of time is spent on Hilder's interviews with Tea Party protesters, resulting in some entertaining exchanges. Despite the fact that Hilder has been saying many of the things the Tea Party espouses for decades, no one seems to recognize him and several of the interviewees seem taken aback by Hilder's message.

FrankenFed sees a new twist on Hilder's formula: a co-host. "Patriot Journalist" Rena Poole assists Hilder with both the hosting and the analysis in the film and she brings a more youthful—and sometimes angrier—perspective to the table. Poole's theories don't vary much from Hilder's own, but she is relevant because she brings an African-American female perspective to the film: a viewpoint absent from the overwhelming majority of Conspiracy Cinema. Poole is quick-witted and has an engaging screen presence, so it is likely that this won't be her last appearance in the genre.

FrankenFed sees Hilder tackle many conspiracy theories but the film keeps the Federal Reserve in the forefront for most of its running time. The film's finale sees Hilder and company advocating a complete rebellion against US currency issued by the Federal Reserve, instructing viewers to literally burn it. Thankfully, Hilder doesn't engage in hypocrisy with this message: you don't need any Federal Reserve notes to see the film as he distributed it for free, and encouraged viewers to make as many copies as they wanted.

INSIDE JOB (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Charles Ferguson
Production Company: Sony Pictures Classics

Inside Job won the Academy Award for Best Documentary at the 2010 Oscars. One wonders if the Oscar voters were aware that they were voting for what is essentially a big-budget Conspiracy Cinema film. Director Charles Ferguson has created one of the most vitriolic anti-Wall Street polemics of all time, and his film exudes a level of anger at both banks and the government that one typically only sees in the most inflamed Alex Jones rants. From Reagan to Obama, *Inside Job* depicts a takeover of the US government by financial interests, to which politicians have willingly submitted.

Inside Job begins with a case study of the formerly financially sound Iceland, showing how deregulation and the meddling of American and British banks took the prosperous country to near bankruptcy over the course of a few years. The remainder of the film is divided into five parts: "How We Got There," "The Bubble," "Crisis," "Accountability," and finally "Where We Are Now." The basic premise of the film is that deregulation by the Reagan and George HW Bush administrations allowed Wall Street to create increasingly riskier methods of revenue generation, methods that even novices should have been able to see would lead to the inevitable collapse in 2008. Ferguson blames the "too big to fail" banks and insurance agencies for this crisis, depicting them as infinitely greedy on top of being regular users of cocaine and prostitutes. There is, however, no silver lining as he explores in "Accountability": those responsible for creating the crisis are still in power, didn't lose any wealth, and actually came out of the crisis richer than before. "Where We Are Now" paints an even bleaker picture: one where the criminals have gotten away with it and are likely do it again.

Inside Job is engagingly made and is lent significant credibility by the narration of actor Matt Damon. Ferguson should be commended for making the extremely murky waters of credit derivative swaps more navigable, and *Inside Job* is remarkable in its ability to place these complicated transactions in layman's terms. This film is perhaps the only way some viewers would be able to understand these very significant events in world history, and, since every scene is structured to demonize those presented, it is impossible to imagine them not being as

incensed as Ferguson. Incredibly effective and persuasive, *Inside Job* is one of the better Conspiracy Cinema films, even though it is doubtful anyone involved with its production would consider it as such.

Since this is a book about conspiracy theories, it bears noting that director Charles H Ferguson is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a group routinely tied to the New World Order.

THE ROCKEFELLER EMPIRE DOCUMENTARY (2010)

Filmmaker/Director: Unaccredited
Production Company: StopTheRobbery

This very brief film purports to expose the true history of the Rockefeller family. It does a good job with the basic history of the oil magnates and financiers, and wastes little time connecting them to almost every conspiracy theory imaginable. *The Rockefeller Empire Documentary* lists the Federal Reserve, all wars, "Big Food," "Big Pharma," and "Big Media" as being the most egregious of the family's crimes.

Just before the film inexplicably stops mid-thought at the twenty-two minute mark, our unnamed narrator appears on camera. He explains to us that he's done some independent research that will present some groundbreaking new information and, in a show of great humility, describes this as "pretty fucking awesome." What he has discovered is "proof" that David Rockefeller is behind the push for a New World Order, but it is ultimately less convincing than the things Rockefeller routinely says whenever he gives an interview.

THE SECRET OF OZ (2009–2011)

Filmmaker/Director: Bill Still
Production Company: None listed

Some scholars have interpreted L Frank Baum's book *The Wizard of Oz* to be an allegorical look at American fiscal policies. This is the position that filmmaker Bill Still takes, and he devotes many scenes in his *The Secret of Oz* to proving that Baum was a Progressive activist, citing his close ties with other political reformers of the day and his support of William Jennings Bryan's presidential bid. This literary analysis and history lesson may seem somewhat out of place in a Conspiracy Cinema film, but the information presented here is interesting on its own and

The Secret of Oz *presents its case against a backdrop of Americana.*

lays a good foundation for the remainder of the film.

The Secret of Oz presents the Federal Reserve as the instrument by which the leaders of the New World Order keep the United States in debt slavery. I'm paraphrasing somewhat; Still doesn't actually use the term "New World Order" in the film—likely in an attempt not to scare off non-conspiracist viewers—but his previous works have made explicit references to the group. Still's assumption about the motives of the Fed are speculation, but his explanation of how the bank works is accurate and yet easily understandable for fiscal novices. The issuance of debt-based currency exposes the borrower, in this case the US government, to become beholden to the lender, the Federal Reserve. This is certainly true from a purely financial sense, but Still expands this idea to state that the Fed is the true power in Washington and regularly influences legislative decisions.

Still uses the Oz metaphor here in the same manner that he argues Baum did—to advocate the issuance of fiat currency (non-debt based currency that has value only in itself; a modern greenback). Unlike some of the Federal Reserve's critics, Still doesn't argue for a return to a currency backed by precious metals, stating that gold or silver standards only lead to financial tyranny by the wealthy. The portrait *The Secret of Oz* paints of bankers is a dim one, blaming them for the Great Depression and the assassinations of Presidents Lincoln and Garfield. Still cautions that the banking cabal behind the Federal Reserve has many more "planned depressions" in store for the near future, making the need for immediate change paramount.

Still presents the material in the film very well but a financial history

of the United States is admittedly dry stuff. Therefore his attention to detail is the film's biggest flaw. Over half of *The Secret of Oz* is prelude to the conspiracy: a back story which begins during the days of the Roman Republic. It is possible that some viewers will find this fascinating; others, however, will lose interest during lengthy explanations of the Panic of 1893. If you fall into the former category, *The Secret of Oz* is an excellently researched film, one that makes a strong case both for the existence of a conspiracy and the necessity of reform.

For those of you wishing that Still had gone into greater detail, his *The Money Masters* covers much of the same material to a much greater depth over the course of four hours.

CONCLUSION

After watching hundreds of hours of Conspiracy Cinema films, I have come to the opinion that the genre has yet to reach its full potential. Conspiracy cinema hasn't had its *Citizen Kane* yet or its *Plan 9 from Outer Space* either. Or, at least, I don't think that it has. Even more so than narrative cinema, Conspiracy Cinema is wholly subjective and the relative "quality" of the film depends entirely on whether or not the viewer is persuaded by the filmmaker's presentation. I saw dozens of films that completely failed at every aspect of competent filmmaking but that I found absolutely engrossing. I watched just as many that could have easily been mistaken for a Hollywood production that reduced me to a catatonic state of boredom. The importance in Conspiracy Cinema is still placed primarily on what is said rather than how it is presented, and I feel that the film or filmmaker that does both equally well has yet to arrive.

Thankfully, the genre shows no signs of slowing down, so the day when the perfect Conspiracy Cinema film arrives could be sooner rather than later. I, for one, will continue watching them until I find it, and probably for a long time after as well. Conspiracy cinema is fun. I don't believe most of the things presented by the films in this book, but that in no way impeded my enjoyment of them. In many cases, disbelief makes these films more entertaining.

The most unexpected result of working on this book was a positive one. It encouraged me to learn more about the events, movements, and concepts that impact all of our daily lives. In order to treat these films fairly, I had to learn as much about their subjects as the filmmakers knew—you can't prove to someone that the Moon landing happened unless you yourself understand the concepts involved in space travel. Conspiracy theorists inevitably know more about a given topic than the average person, so in order to engage with them on an even field, you must become an expert as well.

Whether you consider them to be maverick historians or simply nutcases, it's undeniable that there is one issue where the conspiracy theo-

rists are most definitely right. Knowledge is power, and if you choose not to educate yourself about things that affect your life, you are willfully giving up your power to someone who may not have your best interests in mind. I'm not advocating that you change your entire belief system—I have no more vested interest in your opinions than you do mine. I do, however, advocate that you begin to approach things from a more conspiratorial point of view. Think about the things you believe critically, ask yourself important questions and find the answers to them. Listen to what you are being told with a sceptic's ear; stop accepting others' opinions as fact.

Above all, think for yourself.

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